TWIGS FOR NESTS.

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TWIGS FOR NESTS

OR

NOTES ON NURSERY NURTURE.

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TWIGS FOR NESTS

OR

Notes on Nursery Nurture

By the Author of 'The Expositions of the Cartoons of Raphael,' etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN GRAPHOTYPE

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Dedicated

To the Memory of

A Mother.

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PREFACE.

ANY who have been happy enough to have received Christian nurture themselves, and who have attempted to repeat, in a home full of their own children, that system of training, will have something to say which any parents who are understanding and accepting their parental responsibility will be glad to hear.

Only those, perhaps, who have been educated at home, and whose profession has enabled them to continue an unbroken home life, will be allowed to speak as those having authority on any of those home questions which are admitted on all hands to be full of perplexity, and about which there prevails so great a variety of opinion and practice.

These "Notes on Nursery Nurture" are the result of an intimate acquaintance with two generations of children, and are presented without any pretence either to originality or completeness. The writer has had no

intention of exhausting his subject. He speaks only of those principles and plans which he has himself known, and which he has himself tried ; and he offers the experience of his home life as a contribution to what he conceives to be the most important branch of social science. The reader will find on almost every page the faith that "Twigs for Nests" are a growth and not a manufacture, and the acknowledgment of the universal law, that

> "*Except the Lord build the house*
> *They labour in vain who build it.*"

Gospel Oak, N.W., 1866.

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TWIGS FOR NESTS.

I.—BABIES' CRYING.

"Of nature's tears
I would not rob thee: they invigorate virtue,
Soften at once and fortify the heart;
But when they rise to speak this desperate language,
They then grow tears of weakness."

THOMSON.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. I.—BABIES' CRYING.

"*A time to cry.*"

Many, if not all of us, cry as we come into the world. Some cry for a while, more or less, and then put away crying as a childish thing; others continue crying, and go through and go out of the world as they came into it. They are permitted by their friends, and they allow themselves, to repeat their first act till it becomes a habit, and they remain babies as long as they live.

In most homes, even in those where there are no children, a baby is to be found, young or old; and as a rule the troublesomeness of a baby increases with its years. A mother can soon hush to sleep the little thing that is "mewling and puking" in her arms; and a father, who is half a woman, may often win golden opinions by his mesmeric gifts; but a son or a daughter will sometimes find greater difficulty in the management of their parent than their child. You may listen with admiring wonder to the large noise into which a small infant is putting its temper, and you will be hardly able to restrain a smile when, the art of coining noise into words being only half-learnt, a curious medley of articulate and inarticulate sounds greets your ear; but you will be often tempted to cry yourself if it be your lot to live with some one who has been long able and willing to whimper and whine in plain English.

Every excuse is to be made for the first cry of a new-born babe, and many excuses are to be found for much of the peevishness of some of the fretful tribe; but there is a great amount of crying amongst babies of all ages which is criminal, and some steps should be taken that it may be stopped. Whatever our sex or our age, we were intended to be "men." We are to learn to be quiet, and to bear our own burdens. We may, if we will, groan and grumble with our cronies, but we have no right to become crones. Our troubles are not to form the topic for our conversations, nor the subject for our letters. We may be out of health, but we need not be out of sorts. The sick, and the sorrowful, and the superannuated, are

not to fall into the sin that so easily besets them, and to become a social nuisance. No member of a family, whatever be their age or condition, has any right to make a home miserable. The crying in a cradle may, except a veto be put upon it, lead to the croning in an old arm-chair. "Babies' crying" is a matter which demands investigation, for there is much that is criminal, and the sooner that it is acknowledged and treated as such the better.

We anticipate, at the very outset, what will be said. We fully admit that "there is a great difference in children." But a protest may be made very fairly against the common custom of avoiding the discussion of the principles of nursery nurture, or the merits of some particular case, by the utterance of this trite remark. Granted that there is a great difference in children, it is possible that this difference may be the result of training. Every one knows that there are "good babies," just as there are "happy children" and "pleasant old people." The question is, whether we are to accept as incurable those infirmities of temper which are found in the aged and the young, and which may or may not be hereditary or constitutional. We need to know, for instance, how it is that some mothers can put their infants into their cots, when the little things are wide awake, and they will lie of themselves "as good as gold," and play with their fingers till they fall asleep, while other women, who seem as if they ought to have been childless, will be worn out, day after day, and night after night, with the weeping and the wailing of their fractious babes. Do the

infants that are laid down to get to sleep of themselves grow into the children who go to bed without crying? Is it the same child that cries to go to bed which cries to go to school? Are the good children and the pleasant people we meet with those who have been taught and trained, from the very first, to accept life and to do the things which have to be done? Have the conduct and character of children any connection with the conduct and the character of their parents? Can the waywardness of grown-up cry-babies be traced to the humouring of their first childish whims? Are the children "you can do anything with" those who have been trained to have no will of their own, and are those who are "always a trouble" such as have been allowed to have their own way? Answers to these questions may be found by any who choose to take the trouble to investigate nursery phenomena, and from what may be thus certainly known we may form rules for our guidance in dealing with "babies' crying" which will have all the exactness and certainty of science.

This matter, as it first presents itself to us, is perfectly free from either pain or perplexity. We have been expecting the cry, and are only too thankful to hear it. We know what it is. It is a sound signifying life. It is merely an animal sound, inseparable from animal life. All young things cry. It is a cry coming only out of the body, if indeed the tender organism deserves such a substantial designation. There is no want of food; so, please, do not give it any. Above all, do not poison this fresh spring of life with medicine. The cry is a cry of

relief; and as you are doubtless too full of feeling to express yourself, let the mouth of the babe and suckling speak for you. The babe wants to breathe. Leave it alone. If you must say something to it, you may begin to tell it, if you like, what you will have to tell it, times without number, if it lives. "Don't cry, you can do it." If you must do something, sing—

"'Tis a lesson you should heed,
Try, try, try again;
If at first you don't succeed,
Try, etc.
Then your courage should appear;
For if you will persevere,
You will conquer, never fear,
Try, etc.

The breath and the cry come alike from the same organs. There is a temporary confusion in the exercise of the lungs and the larynx. It has to learn to breathe without crying. The little thing has everything to learn. Before the day is out it will have to try to get its own living, and it is as likely as not that it will cry over its work. After the tearful time of teething it will have to take to solid food, and then once and again, as a tyro in eating, it will bite its tongue. It will have to learn to stand by constantly falling, and if in the commencement of its career it be not petted nor fondled after its failures, it will take gradually as a matter of course the ups and downs of life. After a while all these difficulties will be overcome, and if we care enough about the child to hide our feelings, we shall save

it from belonging to the helpless and hopeless class of mortals who cannot manage themselves and are constantly getting into trouble, and letting their friends know all about it.

There are times, from the first to the last, in this mixed life of ours, when the body will have its own way, and it may, and it must be, allowed its liberty. There are times to cry. A good cry is found, so it is said by some people, to be a great relief, and we can understand that help may be gained in this way, under the vexations as well as under the sorrows of life. We are, however, to keep under the body, and to bring it into subjection. There are many tears that may be prevented, and there is much crying that should be stopped. We hold the opinion that if there were better training there would be more "good babies;" and if the babies were better, there would, we believe, be more good people.

Let us turn again to our new-born babe, and see what can be done. Except it be sickly, if we understand and anticipate its bodily wants—which, by-the-by, will involve no small amount of study, patience, and devotion—we shall be able to say, what many have said before us, who have nursed their babes from the birth, "Our children never cry!" The fact will prove that we possess the genius for nursery nurture, at least so far as the first few months are concerned. If the child be out of health, we admit that the case is altered. There will be special difficulties connected with its management, but these difficulties must be met and mastered. We shall have many a weary day and many a sleepless night, but yet there is something that we

can do for the child, and much that we can do for ourselves, by intelligence and submission. Babies' cries differ, and they must receive different treatment. In some instances they are to be met by fun, in others by philosophy. By fun, we mean some harmless flash of humour, which is ever ready to show itself in a holy home; by philosophy we mean "the wisdom that cometh from above," which we all lack, and which none can receive except it be given by our Father in heaven. The parents of a sick child must live very near to God, and learn of Him that pity and patience which will be required for its nurture and admonition.

Our healthy babe, however, except the greatest caution be maintained, will imperceptibly acquire a habit of crying. If its wants be misunderstood or neglected it will cry, and if the cry be followed by help, it will soon understand the association, and will learn to cry for anything that it wants. We have heard this conduct justified: "What else, poor little thing, can it do? it is its way of asking for what it wants." We do not accept as a necessary home institution the chronic cry of a healthy babe. Our belief is, that crying should be the exception, and not the rule. The babe ought not to be left to cry for anything that it really needs. If it be, then those who have it in charge have failed in their duty; and further (for it is in this way that the child is the father of the man), if the little urchin finds, as it will, that it can obtain anything it cries for, it will soon discover the power it possesses in making itself disagreeable to others. The babe will have been trained to be tiresome. It is in this

way those children are reared whose gifts of teasing seem to be almost preternatural, and who are often acknowledged to be beyond human endurance. It is in these crying homes that you may find the birthplaces of those miserable members of society who are ever troubling others, in order that they may be comfortable themselves.

There is but a step between crying for everything and crying for nothing; the one leads to the other; the force and impetus of the habit are in this direction. Use breeds a fatal facility. Babies' crying may become a vice. We all know the misery of a home where any one of its members has fallen into evil ways. The misery is often greater than it appears. Vicious habits demoralise, for they take away the heart; and it is not only the transgressor who suffers; the home being an organism, all the members suffer with it. The little sinner who has been allowed to fall into the habit of crying for nothing will not be alone in its iniquity; the other children will only too readily follow the example of selfishness. Even the parents, though they may not choose to acknowledge the fact, or may not, perhaps, be aware of it, are not free from its influence. The difficulty becomes a nuisance, and developes into a sin and the occasion of sin. Because this iniquity abounds, the love of some fathers has waxed cold, and "Babies' crying" has interfered with the home habits of other men besides those who work for their living.

If the first cry of the first child be responded to with alacrity and intelligence, if it be regarded, as indeed it is, as the first

oral summons to understand and sustain parental responsibility, nursery nurture will never become invested with insuperable difficulties, and nursery cries will never be uttered in vain. The vocation will be received as a call from God, and that power will be sought and obtained by which alone the courage will be maintained in the face of any difficulty, and the temper will be kept under any annoyance.

An infallible remedy for "babies' crying" is to let it alone. If we are sure that the culprit has nothing to cry for, however long and loudly it may squeal and squall, it will eventually tire itself with its vociferations, and leave off when it discovers that they are of no avail. The mother, or the father, or the grandmother, or some of its relations, will be almost certain to attempt to interfere at a trying time, and except you care for the child a great deal more than they do, you will give way to the pressure that is put upon you, and the child will be comforted for its crying, and will have cried in vain. One or two thorough doses of this 'simple' ensure a perfect and a lasting cure. No one need fear any evil results on the child's feeling towards himself if he has been careful to select the time for trying to teach his child the lesson. We may learn from ourselves that they will ever remember with love and gratitude those who have been just and firm with them in the correction of their faults :—

> "*Few are the fragments left of follies past ;*
> *For worthless things are transient. They that last*
> *Have in them germs of an eternal spirit,*
> *And out of good their permanence inherit.*"

We shall have occasion once and again in these papers to notice the sphere left for the exercise of humour in the management of children. A laugh will often prevent a cry. It will sometimes stop "babies' crying;" and if it fails in these, it may succeed in accomplishing another and almost as desirable an effect. While it may not work out a way of escape, it will help parents to bear the temptation.

A minister of our acquaintance had a course of wearisome nights appointed to him, during the babyhood of his little girl "Kate," and while aiding and abetting the mother in her attempts to give the first lessons in patience to their child, he was in the habit of trying to keep his own temper by looking at the ludicrous side, which is easily to be found in trifling grievances. The nursery rhyme which follows is now often sung in his home, and was produced by him on the one night of the week when he would have been the most thankful if his little one had not lifted up her voice. We close our paper with the hope that his example may stimulate some of our readers, who may be placed in similar circumstances, to go and do likewise.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

Come, come, little Kitty,
I'll sing you a ditty,
A ditty, if quiet you'll be;
I'm sure it's a pity
Our dear little Kitty,
To wake your mother and me.

You know it's not right,
On a Saturday night,
To make such an awful row.
Another night, I might strike a light,
But to-night it's out of the question quite;
Come, hush-a-by, baby, now.

What! keeping up still?
I know you're not ill!
What is it all about!
Be still, be still, or else I will,
Whether your mother will or nil,
From the window throw you out.

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

II.—FAMILY PRAYER.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day;
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life without the brain?
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole world round is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

TENNYSON.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. II.—FAMILY PRAYER.

"Milk for Babes."

"NURSERY PRAYER" would have been given to this paper as its title, if we had not been afraid lest the word "nursery" might mislead some of our readers as to our opinion respecting the place in children's homes where the common prayer should be accustomed to be made. The word would doubtless have suggested the idea which we have conceived of the present topic —that the family prayer in children's homes should be a child's service—but we decided upon retaining the more familiar and comprehensive epithet, lest it should be supposed that we had fallen into a great mistake.

The force of the adage, "a place for everything, and everything in its place," is felt as much by those who have the management of the young, as by any others whose business by its extent and variety seems to demand the help of every convenience, and the strictest adherence to a settled system. The place for children is the nursery, and if it be, as we imagine it should be, the best room in the house, they will be found, as a

rule, to be better and happier there than they are anywhere else.

Children are, however, like ourselves. They are creatures of circumstances. They have like feelings and passions with us. We cannot afford to forget, in our own cases, that we form associations. We cannot help the influence that some places and scenes have over us. Certain trains of thought are suggested which invariably lead away our minds, and there are some feelings which seem to be inseparable from some rooms. There must be a change of place if there is to be a change of thought and feeling. We can only make the best of ourselves when we make the best of our circumstances, and we shall have to give our little ones every advantage if we are to succeed in our present effort, which is to lead them to worship with us Him who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth. Other things, besides the adaptation of place, must combine to make the effort a success; anything, even a trifle, may render it a failure.

A nursery is a necessity. It is, like many other necessities, a blessing in disguise. But it is to the little ones, though it may be large and lofty, and full of playthings, what the school-room is to the elder children, and what the shop, or the office, or the study is to ourselves. The boy rushes out of the school-room, the hands we employ drop their tools and leave the factory, at the stroke of the hour for closing, and after the day's business the master is only too ready to turn his back on the walls and furniture of the office that he knows too well. Children are always glad to leave the nursery and to come down-stairs.

They are tired of it, and being tired, are sure to be tiresome. The first step taken, then, in the direction of the family altar

is in our favour. We are often good when we are happy, and the little ones, being pleased, are likely to behave themselves. There is not only a present but a future benefit connected with this change of place and scene. Having pleasant associations

with the service, they may not only be induced to pray with us but to pray by themselves, and when we are passed away to pray with our children's children.

Coming into that part of the home which looks more like "the Father's house," after having paid all that attention to cleanliness which is next to godliness, which we feel to be due to those who live with us and which they are taught to regard as an absolute necessity; rejoiced at being where we are, our children will be as ready and able to worship with us, *cæteris paribus*, as we sometimes feel we shall be, when we are summoned to leave this weary world, and, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, shall see our Father in heaven, and be with Him where He is.

The time for the service is to be chosen on the same principle as the place. The circumstances of the children are to be considered. In fact, in this as in all things, our cue is to be taken from them. Our plans are to be accommodated to their powers. A careful observation of the possibilities of childhood, and the special limitations of each home, will easily and certainly acquaint us with the best time for the commencement and the close of such a service as we are contemplating. It is as much from a want of thought as a lack of talent, that many have experienced so much difficulty in sustaining the interest of their households in family worship. Success in this, as in most other undertakings, depends upon what those who fail consider to be trifles. For instance, where the inmates of a home are adults, the best time for prayer is before meals, but

where there are children, and especially where there is a child in arms, there is not much likelihood of securing quietness except the little ones have eaten and drunk:—

> "*The veins unfilled, their blood is cold, and then*
> *They pout upon the morning.*"

It is to be feared that there is some reason to believe in the supposition that we are failing now-a-days in our family prayer. In one or two instances we have known it to have been relinquished, the heads of the households confessing that it had become in their homes a mockery. There are two cases in which we could give evidence. In the one the children are grown up; in the other they are of tender years. While believing in the necessary and intimate connection that exists between family religion and family worship, we should shrink from summarily settling these cases by attributing to a want of home piety this absence of its manifestation. It is possible that in some cases there may not have been that kind or measure of religious feeling, which is required in all those who have to lead the devotions of others. Any religious engagement which is perpetually recurring at regular intervals, is a severe test of the character of our Christianity. A daily service is very apt to become a mere performance of a duty, and where there is a possibility it will be omitted, the burden of perfunctoriness being too heavy to be borne by those who officiate, and the weariness and monotony becoming intolerable to those who have been obliged to assist.

The canon of our Lord, "God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," is as applicable to family prayer as it is to any other. If we are not worshipping God in spirit in our homes, we are worshipping Him in vain, and shall soon not worship Him at all. There is more in these words of our Lord, as indeed there is in all that came from His mouth, than we may at first suspect. The spirit of prayer gives us not only power with God, but power with others. Spiritual worship is not only acceptable to God, but it is found to be acceptable to those who join in it. Further: having the Spirit, we shall not only have power with God, and with our little ones, knowing, as we shall presently see, what things to pray for, and how to pray, as we ought; but being possessed by the Spirit, we shall be willing and able to cause all things to work together for the success of our home worship. For instance, being led by the Spirit, we shall lead a home life, in order that, little by little, we may accumulate home knowledge and home power. We shall lay out ourselves for our children with all that purpose, persistence, and genius which ever characterise those who are in earnest.

Family prayer is one of the many branches of family religion, and, like the rest, it will be fruitless, and soon wither and die, if the root of the matter be not in the home. It is but one of the many elements in Nursery Nurture, and as each division of our subject comes under our consideration, we shall find that while it comprises diversities of gifts, differences of administration, and diversities of operations, it is yet a unity, and that the

same laws are to be seen in operation in its various spheres. We live to learn that none of these laws can be disobeyed with impunity, and that they are as inseparable as they are imperative. If one part of Nursery Nurture suffers, the whole suffers with it.

Our choice of a house is to be determined by our children. If they be young, there must be a nursery ; and as we shall never regret making any known law our guiding principle, so, as our children are ever to be to us in all things our first consideration, the house is likely to become a home, if the turning of our taking it has been decided by "the children's room."

The same law will be in operation if we are called to choose our place of residence. Very few will find that they can afford to live in the suburbs. Any whose business lies at home may live almost anywhere they like, for it will never interfere with their accumulation of home power, or prevent their exhibition of home piety. But if a suburban life involves, as it mostly does, our being with our children only one day in a week, why then, together with other modern customs which can only be observed at the expense of our homes, it must be avoided. We must live with our children if we are to love them, and they are to love us. If we were to become strangers at home, there would be many things with which we could not intermeddle. Amongst these would be family prayer. Perhaps this modern custom of living away from business has had more influence than some imagine on their home feeling, their home power, and their home religion. Nothing is plainer than that it must affect the point before us—the time of family prayer. Where the father leaves at so early

an hour that there is either no time to hold the service at all, or only to hold it in a hurry, and where he returns so late that there is no possibility of holding it at night, the children being tired or asleep, we can easily understand that the family altar is never reared, or if the attempt be made, it is soon in ruins, the fire being unfed with home feeling and ever going out.

It is the old tale over again. Nothing can be done without taking a great deal of pains. Everything, at any rate in Nursery Nurture, is full of labour; and those who will not accept this ordinance will be always finding it a trouble, and be ever speaking of their children as troublesome.

It is possible that there is less family prayer than we imagine; it is certain that there is less than there appears to be. If the nursery element is to enter into the home worship where there are children, we are afraid that there are many homes without family prayer. It is piteous to think of the wrongs of the young. There are many children living in good houses who have no homes. Many who are fed and clothed and educated are suffering from parental neglect. There are other little ones besides those in our factories who are treated as men and women. Some pious parents and some Sunday-school teachers will perhaps one day see that they will have much to answer for. People with very good intentions may do very great harm. The long services at which children are obliged by their elders to assist, with nothing whatever to compensate them for their struggle against their natural restlessness, may perhaps be of some avail to adults, but they are certainly fraught with fatal

influence upon the young. We shall have something presently to say about "sitting still" and "keeping quiet;" and we do not ignore the fact that we cannot avoid doing some wrong when-

ever we do right. But we would now, and with all the earnestness with which we are capable, draw the attention of those of our readers who have to conduct family worship to the fact, that their success will depend not only upon the time and the place, but the manner of their doing so.

We are of opinion that the admitted neglect of public worship, and the supposed neglect of family prayer, may be attri-

buted largely to the early recollections of weariness which are associated in many minds with the worship of God. There is a strange aversion that many have to enter the house of God, and which more have to open His word, which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by the ordinary solution of the depravity of our nature. It is well known that there are those who have been so disgusted with some food, although it was good to eat, when they were children and obliged to take it, that they never touch it now, when they can eat what they like. To be forced, as a Sunday scholar, to sit still for an hour and a half, after having been kept for the same time at school ;—to be forced to be quiet every day, and to appear to listen to reading and prayer in a language which needs to be interpreted, is to be placed in circumstances that are sure to be held in lasting remembrance, and to be accompanied with pernicious and enduring results.

Family prayer, where there are children, must be a child's service. If the Bible is to be understood, it must be translated. We must make or use a child's version of the Scriptures. There should be milk for babes. Just as our Father uses our language and our way of putting things when He puts His will before us, so we must use our children's language ; we must speak as a child if we would put His will before them. Here, again, is the law of labour, and it is more difficult to be simple than some may imagine. It is easy to be childish, but we must take some pains to be childlike.

There must be a selection of passages as well as of words.

Nothing, at first sight, seems to be a better plan than to read the Bible through, just as it is, at family prayer. This is certainly an improvement on the system adopted, in a home we know, of accompanying it with "Henry's Commentary." But there is a more excellent way. There are portions of the Scriptures which seem to have been written, and they doubtless were, for children. Take for instance, those which contain the life of our Lord. We venture upon offering an example of what we mean :—

MARK V. 21–43.

"Jesus had been in a ship on the sea. And when He had landed from the ship He found a great many people on the shore, who came and crowded about Him. While He was talking and walking with the people, one of the great men who lived at the place where he was, ran up to Him, and fell down on his knees, and began to beg and to pray. He said : 'I have a little girl at home, my own child, who is very ill, and is going to die. Oh, will you come ! If you would only put your hands on her, and touch her, she would get well. If you came she would live.' So Jesus went with the man, and as He went the crowds went with Him. Now while they were going on the road to the great man's house, a poor woman, who had been ill for twelve years, and had suffered a great many things from a great many doctors, and had spent all her money and was no better, but only worse, when she heard that Jesus was in the crowd, she pushed through the people, and came behind and laid hold of Christ's cloak, for she said, 'If I can but touch His

cloak, I shall get well.' And in a minute her sickness left her, and she felt that she was quite well.

"Jesus, knowing what had been done, turned round on the crowd, and asked, 'Who touched my cloak?' And His disciples said to Him, 'Why do you ask who touched you? do you not see all the people pressing upon you?' And Jesus looked round to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, frightened and trembling, knowing that it was she, and that she had stolen a blessing, came and fell down and told Him all the truth. And Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, you believed that if you could only touch my cloak you would get well: because you believed, I forgive you: go in peace, and keep well.'

"While He was talking to the woman, some servants came from the great man's house and told him that his little girl was dead, and that it was of no use now for Jesus to go any farther. As soon as Jesus heard the message, he said to the man, 'Do not be frightened, only believe.' And Jesus would not let the crowd follow Him, but only Peter and James, and John the brother of James. And He came to the house, and He saw crowds of people weeping and crying. And when He was come in He said to them, 'Why do you make this noise? why do you cry? The little girl is not dead, she is asleep.' And all the people laughed at Him. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the little girl, and the disciples, and went into the room where the little girl was lying. And He took the little girl by her hand and said to her, 'Talitha cumi,' which means, 'Little darling, get up.' And in a moment

the little girl got up and walked about, for she was twelve years old. And they all cried out with wonder. And Jesus told them to be quiet, and to give the little girl something to eat."

We are not willing to give a form of prayer. Speaking broadly, we may say that we do not believe in forms, at any rate in a home. Prayers, where there are children, are to be offered on the same principle as the Scriptures are to be read, and any parent who lives very near to God and very near to his little ones, will find that he is able to pray with them. His home life will fill his heart with an abundance of thought and feeling which he will be only too ready to turn into prayer. If we are training our children to believe that their real Father is in heaven, and that we have nothing for them but what He gives, if we are in the habit of associating everything with him, then we shall find in the fulness and variety of every season, and of every day, a well-spring of prayer which will be everlasting and always fresh.

A particular and distinct recognition of the blessings which we are ever receiving from the hand of God, and the sins we are constantly committing, instead of any general acknowledgment of these things, and a careful avoidance of vain repetitions, will be found to awaken the attention and to sustain the interest of our children. The amazing variety of events and circumstances, within and without, and the analogies which are authorised by revelation, will suffice to prevent the service from becoming barren or monotonous. The snow

that has come down from heaven during the night, and which has arrested their attention in the morning; the discovery in the spring that some of the things which they have sown in their garden have sprung up, and they know not how; the sunshine pouring through their windows; the love that we have for them, and that which they have for us; their sickness or their health; the difficulty found by us all in ceasing to do evil, and the common weariness in well-doing; the school and its lessons; the good Book; the Father and the home in heaven; the life and love of our Lord; the movings of the Spirit in our hearts; the birthdays of the living and the dead; the selfishness and quarrelling; the indolence and murmuring; what we eat and what we drink, and what we put on;—"In all these things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we may make our wants known unto our God."

There is sometimes to be noticed in the inner life of our homes, as well as in the outer life in our world, a curious mingling of things grave and gay, of things sacred and things so-called profane. Our last hint must be received with that recollection. It is offered to those only who have homes, and who love them, and who are led by their love to wish to be all together at the times when the family meets. It is a hint about "sitting still" and "keeping quiet."

We had not long been parents before we found "the difficulty of the baby!" A while we submitted to its despotism, and allowed ourselves to be the sport of its humours. Matters were, however, becoming serious, when, on a day ever to be re-

membered, we lighted, by accident, on a discovery. The child was laid, unwittingly, on its back on a table, and it seemed to enjoy, for the nonce, the position. The moment was improved. Efforts, the inspiration of the crisis, were made to occupy its attention. They succeeded, and the child seemed to forget its restlessness. This was the origin of one of our most useful home institutions. Every child in the home has been thus induced to be still. The name, familiar now in our mouth as a household word, given to this ordinance is "*tables!*" Many a time, for the fun of the thing, at the magic sound, a whole string of children have laid themselves flat on their backs on the floor, and we have laughed who have won them to acquire a habit of control over their natural restlessness. This precious gift of "keeping still" will not have to rust in them unused in after-life; and it has, in combination with other things, rendered it possible for us to have all our children around us when we have our family prayer.

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

III.—NURSERY NONSENSE.

"Women know
The way to rear up children (to be just);
They know a simple, merry, tender knack
Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
And stringing pretty words that make no sense,
And kissing full sense into empty words;
Which things are corals to cut life upon,
Although such trifles; children learn by such
Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
And get not over-early solemnised;
But seeing as in a rosebush love's design,
Which burns and hurts not—not a single bloom,
Become aware and unafraid of love.
Such good do mothers.

ELIZ. BARRETT BROWNING.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. III.—NURSERY NONSENSE.

"A time to laugh."

There is an apparent impropriety in discussing the topic of Nursery Nonsense directly after discoursing upon Family Prayer. Another arrangement in these notes might easily have been made, but then we should have lost one of those opportunities which are constantly occurring in our home life, of noticing and dwelling for a moment upon the subtle harmony which exists between its discordant engagements. The touch of nature in the sequence of Babies' Crying, Family Prayer, and Nursery Nonsense, will be felt at once by our readers, and will bring us nearer together.

Were we writing for any others but parents, or were we careful about preserving our character for propriety, it would have been policy to render the passage more easy by interposing some subject which would serve to break the abruptness of the transition. Addressing ourselves, however, to those who are wise enough to be sometimes fools, and who will judge what we say, having understanding in all things relating to children, we are not careful about being misunderstood. Their ears will have been attuned, as well as our own, to the music of our course of home duties as they follow each other in their quick succession, endless variety, and different keys.

The step from the sublime to the ridiculous, must often be taken by those who are leading divine and human lives. Those who are striving to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord will be taking it, advisedly, many times a-day. They will have sympathised with us, we trust, in our effort to rear such an altar in our homes that our children can really worship God, and as we turn now and take this step, they will accompany us, without any of that fastidiousness which is found in some families in reference to fun.

No difficulty will be felt except by those who have adopted the heathen division of duties into sacred and secular, or who are labouring under the Jewish delusion that men or things, as God has made them, can be common or unclean. Accepting equally from God, His own Son, as He freely offers Him to us in the gospel, and our own children as He places them in our arms, we shall find ourselves, easily and naturally, pass-

ing in a moment from striving to please Him to striving to please them. There will be doubtless an appearance of incongruity in our conduct, to those who are strangers to Christianity, just as to many in the time of our Lord, and to some in our own day, the union of the divine and human natures in Christ was and is a stumbling-block. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ commends Himself to us, because we find Him to be man as well as God, and Christianity is, "without controversy," the religion for us, since it recognises, without any respect of duties, our whole life. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God."

We believe in what is called now-a-days the religion of common life, and that we may be continuously under divine direction, and that if we are so, we are always led by the same spirit in the performance of all our engagements. Nothing that is necessary will appear to us to be out of place. Christianity can give that breadth to our life which characterises the picture of a master, where the details are so treated that, instead of disturbing and lessening, they are found rather to increase the unity of the work.

The little Benjamin, as he sits on your knee when you read the Bible at family prayer, may be so handled that he will not interfere with the spirit of the service, though he is looking around him with a comical quietness, first at one, and then at another member of the circle. He is amusing himself, but he is not amusing them. He will not hinder you, as you lead the devotions of the home, though you may feel his fairy fingers playing

with your watch-chain. We have discovered that we may safely reward the urchin for his exemplary self-control by a piece of quiet fun, which follows in our home immediately upon the family "Amen." A special *doddle* is reserved for these seasons, which by its quietness is evidently a source of exquisite enjoyment to the babe, and by the science and strength which it betrays, is as evidently the admiration and almost the envy of the bystanders. All this may sound simple and childish, but we are all very happy, and as most of us are children, we could not perhaps adopt a better way of expressing the old experience, that "happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

Whatever may be the philosophy, it is clearly the fact, that instead of there being any inconsistency between religion and amusement, they are closely connected. They are not only not antagonistic, but they are even auxiliary. Holiness leads to humour. Our best men are often our best wits. Those who have read our old divines, and who have numbered among their friends or relatives any who are thoroughly Christian, will understand what we mean.

The good, according to the old adage, are happy, and are ever ready for any good word or work; and thus it is that they are to be seen taking a little child, and doing or saying something that will pass its time, or divert its attention from some trouble into which it has fallen.

Children are ticklish in their mind as well as their body. Like most young things, they are born with a disposition for play. Even a babe possesses the sense of the ridiculous, and

responds at once to your touch, if you have wit enough to be able to tickle its fancy. These gifts are surely not intended to be left rusting in them unused. They must have been bestowed for some purpose, and what that may be is presently discovered by us, if we have much to do with their management. Without going to any extremes, or suffering ourselves or others to abuse "this good creature of God," we may safely and thankfully receive it as a precious element in Nursery Nurture.

Good children are not always quiet, nor are we doing our best for our little ones by always "minding" them and keeping them still. They have to be left, at times, to themselves; to be turned loose into the nursery, if the weather be foul, or into the fields if it be fair; and we may thus do something to prevent them becoming heavy and prosy and matter-of-fact, and adding, as they grow up, to the decent dulness of the world.

There is to be, of course, a method in our madness, and the nature and limitations of opportunities are to be studied. Nursery nonsense will sometimes require to take the shape of frolic. Our merry-making must be an embodiment. The fun must be acted, and then we may be led, according to circumstances, in the direction of gambols, pranks, antics, romps, even as far, if we will, as high-jinks, only caring to keep ourselves and the whole of the noisy crew so well in hand as to steer quite clear of any practical jokes. Buffoonery and tomfoolery will be found to be as unnecessary as they are vulgar. We may be droll and full to overflowing with all kinds of pleasantry without losing any of our own self-respect, or trenching in the least on

the self-respect of one of the least of the little ones. There may be ridiculousness without ridicule, and we may laugh as much as we will with our children so long as we do not laugh at them.

When matters are serious, and a cry has to be prevented, or stopped, or turned into a smile, then our success will depend upon our words rather than our works. A child that has had a fall, or that has bit its tongue, or scratched its arm, is in no humour either for noise or motion. It wants to be quiet and to be cosseted. A little petting, under such circumstances, may be a good thing, but we shall have to recollect that with such handling, we shall be nursing the grievance as well as nursing the child. There is a more excellent way. Nothing perhaps can be done to divert the attention from the trouble, but something may be said, and a comic tale at such a time will not only quickly heal the wound, but will serve as a stone in the foundation of the habit that we are wishing to form of forgetting grievances, which in such a world as ours, where offences must needs come, will be of no mean service.

A tale that is to give immediate relief to the patient, and which is to effect a perfect cure, must be nonsensical. It must possess, like all genuine nonsense, two apparently inconsistent characteristics. It must be so extraordinary as to arrest the attention at once and completely carry away the mind, and yet must refer to things familiar, and which already form a part of nursery experience and nursery literature. It had best be an old friend with a new face. Its power will lie in its grotesque-

ness, and there is nothing better, perhaps, to have in our mind's eye, as we improvise it, than a gargoyle, in which the artist, while giving the wildest play to his fancy, has yet preserved the form of natural features.

Example is better than precept, and we select the following tale as one that answered the end for which it was told. Our little girl had to swallow a dose of medicine, and we promised her that if she drank it off at once, we would tell her a story that would take the taste out of her mouth. We seated her on our knee, administered the draught, and began as follows :—'

"Once upon a time, a long while ago, two little birds lived in a nest in the country with their mother, and she used to give them a halfpenny a-week for pocket-money. At first they used to spend their halfpennies in sweets, till their mother, who was poor, asked them to save up their pocket-money and buy two new bonnets. At the end of a year the two little birds had money enough, and went off to the town to buy their bonnets. When they got to the shop, the woman at the shop had plenty of bonnets, bonnets for horses, bonnets for cows, bonnets for pigs, and bonnets for dogs, but she was quite out of bonnets for birds. When the two little birds found that she had no bonnets for them, they looked very sad, and one of them was beginning to cry, when the woman said 'Don't cry; go to London and buy them : any one can get anything in London.'

"So the little birds flew off to London, found the bonnet shop, and bought two beautiful bonnets. I can't tell you how beautiful they were. Well, when the woman at the shop was

fitting the bonnets on the birds, she told them that the Queen had said, that if ever any birds came to London to buy any bonnets she should be very glad to see them. So the woman called a cab, and the birds hopped in, and they went off to the Queen's house. And as soon as the Queen heard that the birds in bonnets had come, she ran out and popped her head in at the cab window, and said, 'Come in, come in!' So they went in, and the Queen took them into a long room where there were two long tables. Then the Queen called to her servants, and they brought in sweets, and buns, and cakes, and cherries, and currants, and liquorice, and all sorts of good things, and the birds began to eat. One bird hopped up and down one table, picking and eating, and the other bird hopped up and down the other table, picking and eating. So when they had been picking and eating a very great deal, and I think their mother would say a very great deal too much, the Queen had two large sacks brought in, and the servants filled the sacks with what was left, that the birds might take it home to their mother.

"Then the Queen said to the little birds, 'Now is there anything else that you would like?' So they looked at each other, and neither liked to say anything, till at last the bolder little bird (the little bird that did not cry) spoke up and said, 'If you please, ma'am, we should like to have a ride in your coach.' 'Well,' said the Queen, 'and so you shall.' So she told all her men to fetch all her horses, and the men put all the horses into her coach, and brought it round to the door, and the birds hopped in, and then the Queen put her head in at the window

and asked the little birds where they would like to go. The little birds did not say anything : one was sitting on one cushion, and one on the other ; and they looked at each other, till at last the bolder bird spoke up : 'If you please, ma'am, when we have been in our nest at night with our mother, we have often looked up at the moon, and wished to go there, and we knew it was too far for us to fly, but we knew that the Queen's coach could go ; we should like, if you please, to go to the moon.' Now this seemed to puzzle the Queen for a moment, but then in a minute she said: 'Oh, I can manage it ; my horses cannot go, but a little while since I had a present made to me of the cow that jumped over the moon ; my men shall take the horses out of the coach and put her in. So after all the men had taken all the horses out of the coach, they all went off to catch the cow. Oh, how the cow jumped and jumped ! No one could catch her, till at last they got her into a field where there were some very high trees, and they caught her and brought her and put her in. 'Now,' says the Queen, 'you must be quick ; the cow will stop for only a jiffy when she gets over the moon, and one of you must fly out of one window, and the other fly out of the other window.' So off went the cow with the coach, just stopped for a jiffy when she got over the moon, and one bird flew out of one window, and the other bird flew out of the other, and then, alighting on the ground, they began to walk about.

"Walking about, they came to a road, and at a little distance they saw something lying in the road, and hopping up to it to

see what it was, they found it was a fiddle, and that out of one of the small holes in the fiddle there was a long black thing wagging to and fro. Now, when they were looking at the fiddle, wondering what this black thing was, they heard a noise, 'Meeaow, Mee-ee-aow, Mee-ee-ee-aow,' and there was the cat in the fiddle! But how the cat could have got into the fiddle, or how the cat would get out, the birds could not tell, for the holes were so small. Well, when the birds were standing by the fiddle, wondering about the cat, they heard somebody laughing as loud as he could. Now, there was a low wall running alongside the road, and the birds looking over, they saw a

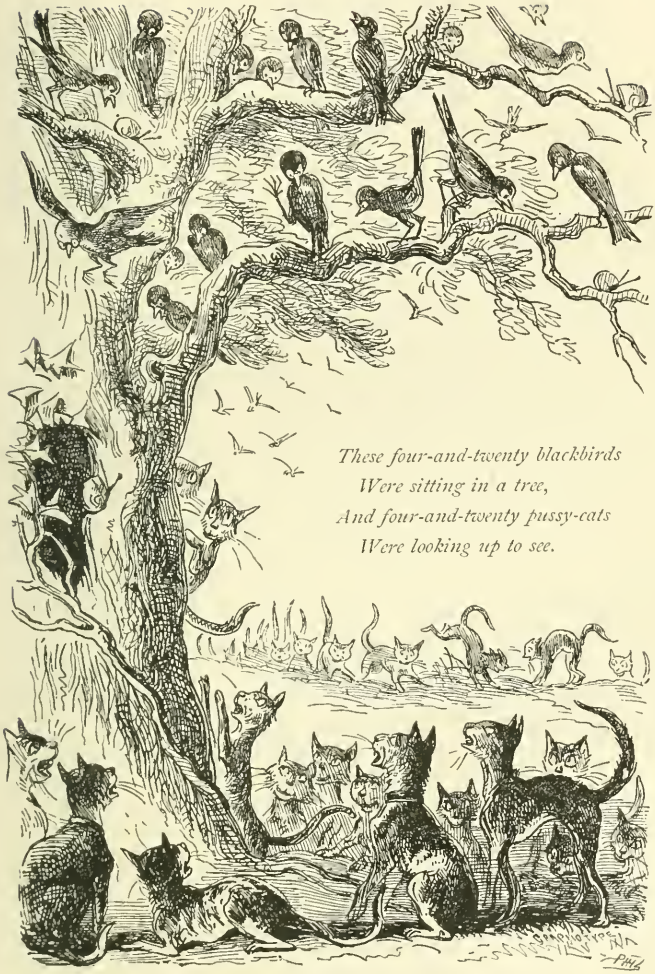
little dog laughing, and he had laughed so heartily that he had shaken off all the hair from his sides and tail, and there were just a few hairs left on the top of his head and the top of his back. Well, when they were looking at this little dog as he was laughing and shaking off all his hair, they heard some one coming as fast as he could, and they turned to see who it was, but he had got so far away that they were obliged to fly after him, and then they saw that it was the dish that had run away with the spoon."

Garrick says: "Fun gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no." Now, whether we touch a child's body or mind, if we are able to lay hold of either or both at those times when it begins to look as if it were about to be possessed with some grievance, and by something or other that we say or do, shake out of it the beginnings of the evil, we shall be very wise in our foolishness, and there will be great sense in our nonsense. We have to remember that we can hardly afford to miss any opportunity of pleasing our children in trifles which they can understand and appreciate, seeing that the heavy responsibilities resting upon us often oblige us to curb and correct them, and cause our conduct to wear the aspect of severity. It is comparatively easy to maintain the strictness of routine, or, on the other hand, to act in such a way as to lose even the semblance of authority. We have not to adopt either of these methods of management, but both of them. This ought we to do, and not to leave the other undone. The combination of these heterogeneous elements

is impossible with man, but possible with God; and their union affords that sign of genius to our children, which alone perhaps will be sufficient to persuade our children that their parents are teachers sent from God.

We have succeeded once and again, in mid-winter, when the children have been shut up the whole day in the nursery through the weather, in destroying the weariness and monotony by putting in a sudden appearance, and singing something which was composed for the occasion. The stillness and gloom have been broken by a merry peal of laughter, which we were happy enough to provoke by ringing some changes on one of our old rhymes.

The couple of dozen of blackbirds, whose heroism and loyalty have been sung for ages, have often furnished us with topics for speculation, and they are now become well-nigh historical characters in our homes. They have often been quoted as worthy and remarkable instances of patience and pluck, and we have turned, by the help of their example, a cry into singing. Others, like ourselves, will have had access to equally trustworthy records, and will be in possession of special and original information, which, for the sake of the birds, to say nothing of children, ought to be published. There must be materials in existence, which, if they could be collected, would furnish something like a complete history of the lives and songs of these feathered heroes. We place at the service of any who would undertake this labour of love these two verses :—



These four-and-twenty blackbirds
Were sitting in a tree,
And four-and-twenty pussy-cats
Were looking up to see.

The four-and-twenty blackbirds
Were hunting after snails,
The four-and-twenty pussy-cats
Were wagging all their tails.

These four-and-twenty blackbirds,
They went to see the Queen,
And she came out, and looked about,
And found them on the green.
And in and out, and round about,
They sat them in a ring;
When she came out and looked about,
They all began to sing.

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

IV.—CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS.

"*O thou bright thing, fresh from the hand of God,*
The motions of thy dancing limbs are swayed
By the unceasing music of thy being!
Nearer I seem to God when I look on thee.
'Tis ages since he made his youngest star:
His hand was on thee as 'twere yesterday,
Thou later revelation! Silver stream,
Breaking with laughter from the lake divine,
Whence all things flow! O bright and singing babe,
What wilt thou be hereafter?"

SMITH.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. IV.—CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAYS.

"*Unto us a child is born,*
Unto us a son is given."

It may be thought, at first sight, that these words of the prophet Isaiah are wrested, by turning them into a motto for a paper upon Children's Birthdays. At least, those who have never been awaiting the advent of a child, or who have not accepted, in all its fulness, the revelation of the Fatherhood of God, may be unable or unwilling to admit the propriety of this adaptation. We have placed them where they are, because they were the

first words that occurred to us when our first child was born, and others, we should imagine, must have thus appropriated them, or will be ready to do so, if their circumstances resemble our own.

There are times when our feelings can only find their expression in the words of the Bible, and we may safely give vent to them by these utterances, when we are led to do so by the consciousness that our God is not very far from us, and that we are not very far from Him. When, as in the birth of a child, we have stood still and seen Him working wondrously, we are not likely to be content with any other vehicle for a description of His works than His own words. Our friends may say—

"*The Lord hath done great things for them;*"

and we may reply—

"*The Lord hath done great things for us;*
Whereof we are glad."

"*This is the day which the Lord hath made;*
We will rejoice, and be glad in it."

The passage in the prophecies of Isaiah refers to the Messiah, and it is one of the many which declare that God has given to us His own Son; but there are other passages in Holy Writ which assure us that our children are also His offspring, and that the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the God and Father of those who are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Having known and believed the love of God to the world, as it has been manifested in the gift of his only-begotten Son, we may be forgiven if we take from

Him, as a later and more personal revelation of His love to ourselves, the gift of our own children. There is no ground for any charge of ignorance or irreverence, for had we not known and loved Christ we should never have known or loved the Father, and it is probable—perhaps it is certain—that this knowledge and love are to be alike exalted and increased through our parenthood.

We have found children's birthdays to be holy-days. They may not be equally regarded as such by all, and after a while the anniversaries may be kept, like other anniversaries of holy-days, as holidays; but throughout Christendom, even in those homes where there is not at any other time any recognition of religion, there will be found even a superstitious importance attached to the season of childbirth, and to the necessity of making some public acknowledgment of the existence and interference of Almighty God. We have known several parents who never enter any place of divine worship except after the birth of their children, or at Christmas. This conduct reminds us of some of the traditions which have prevailed respecting the time when our Lord was born :—

> "*Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes*
> *Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,*
> *The bird of dawning singeth all night long :*
> *And then they say, no spirit dares stir abroad ;*
> *The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike,*
> *No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,—*
> *So hallow'd, and so gracious is the time.*"

Holy-days are days of God and days of the Son of Man.

Our Lord promised before he went away that he would come again and again, and that the Father would come and manifest himself to us. It is this coming of our Lord that gives the holiness to His day in our week, and as it approaches we wait and look for His appearing. Our God is ever coming to us at divers times and in different ways, as our Father in heaven, bringing good and perfect gifts. There are holy hours in each day when we are watching unto prayer, and it is then we receive the strength and the counsel and the comfort which the day demands. These hours and days are common to us and to others, but there are, in addition, seasons of special and personal significance,—for instance, of natural and spiritual birth ; and while we keep holy the Lord's day and the common times of prayer, and thus have communion with the universal church, we set apart as individual anniversaries the times when God brought new life into our hearts, or new life into our homes.

If the gospel of the Fatherhood of God be true, it is worthy our entire and hearty reception. If God be the Father of our children, then it is of the utmost moment that we recognise this fact from the very first; and if we do this, we shall find that, as in other holy-days, we feel His power as well as see His glory. So when God puts the little one into our arms to nurse for Him, we shall discover that He works mightily in us, because of our faith, giving us the determination and the ability to rear it in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If these things be so,—if when a child is born we are wise enough to understand this fresh evidence of the loving-kindness of our God to us ; if we

have married in the Lord, and, as husband and wife, are of one mind and one spirit;—then, when the travail is over, and a child is born into the world, and we feel a new tie binding us each to the other, and both of us to the babe and its Father in heaven, we may with all reverence give expression to our joy in the words—

"*Unto us a child is born,*
Unto us a son is given."

There is, without doubt, a sacredness in these seasons, and it is for us to preserve, as long as we can, their hallowed influence. In the early years of a home, as in the early days of a week, the effect of the holy-day may be often deeply felt and plainly seen. There is often, for instance, an expression of divinity to be found in the faces of the young mother and the young children. The mother, for a few years, looks as if she had been pondering over the facts and the truths contained in the gospels of the Fatherhood of God and the Infancy of our Saviour, and had laid them up in her heart. The countenances of the little ones seem to expound some of the meaning in the words of our Lord, "of children is the kingdom of heaven." Days and years, however, often deaden our conviction, and by the middle of the week, and the middle of life, we are, alas! perceptibly moved away from our faith and hope. We have left our first love. We are apt to forget that we live under the law of renewal, and that day by day, week by week, year by year, our souls need to be restored. All of us who are in the habit of examining ourselves must be conscious of the waste, demoralization, and corruption, which are to be constantly dis-

covered in our better thoughts and feelings. We cannot continue in one stay. "In us there dwelleth no good thing."

This deterioration is as manifest in our conduct as parents as it is in our other spheres of duty, and as we contrast ourselves with what we were, we hear the voice, "Remember therefore from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first work." We are often revived by our minds being stirred by way of remembrance, and perhaps there is no surer means of our hearts being turned again to our children, than by calling to remembrance the former times, and keeping the anniversaries, as we kept the birthdays, as holy to the Lord. If our little ones are to answer the end for which they were born, and to fulfil the purpose for which they came into the world, there must be, at any rate on our part, a remembrance of the great truths which we accepted at the first, year by year, continually.

We must take heed to ourselves and to our gospels, we must continue in them; and in doing this we shall both save ourselves and those who belong to us. We cannot afford to misspend a birthday, any more than a Sunday. We need every opportunity for our children, as much as we do for ourselves. Our power in our heart and our power in our home will be found to be in proportion to the regularity of our spiritual life. If, for instance, we have been happy enough to feel aright, and to feel deeply, from the first, and have in principle kept the early birthdays of a child to the Lord, we shall find that in the two or three years, when but little apparently can be done and nothing can be said, our faith and hope in the Fatherhood

of God will have silently and surely struck their roots into our heart and all that is within us. Our early and sustained convictions will save us from being eventually weary in well-doing. We shall endure the heat and the burden of the day. If, on the other hand, the tap-root be broken, our leaf will wither, and we shall not bring forth fruit in due season, and many things that we do will not prosper.

This early, persistent, and continuous course of action will not only give us that power that will prevail over ourselves, but that power that will prevail with our God and our children. Every year our position will become stronger at a throne of grace, and we shall learn that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." When the time has come that we may plead with our little ones, the words will come from our hearts and not from our mouths, and the accumulated abundance of thought and feeling will furnish us with arguments which may perhaps win them at once to the love and service of God. If they are not to be persuaded by us in their youth; if, growing up, they leave our homes and appear to be beyond our further influence; or if we die;—we may, living or dying, possess our souls in patience, for we have not only the word of God, which guarantees that we shall reap as we have sown, and that our children shall grow up as they have been trained ("and the scripture cannnot be broken"), but we have also the witness in ourselves. Those of us who were constrained to arise and go to our Father, long after we had left our homes, by the latent force of early nurture, and who find that to be a present means

of grace which a generation since was a means of conversion, may well believe that God cannot be mocked, that none spend their strength for nought who labour under his direction, and that He ashames and confounds none who put their trust in him.

> "*O Lord, thou art not fickle,*
> *Our hope is not in vain;*
> *The harvest for the sickle*
> *Will ripen yet again.*"

The first birthdays of our children are to be holy-days to us, but they must be holidays to them. We have to nourish and cherish in our own hearts the conviction that their birth was a blessing, and we must sow this good seed in the hearts of our children before the enemy comes with his tares, trying to raise within them suspicions and doubts respecting the reality of the boon of existence. Well-spent birthdays will do much to preserve our homes from the scepticism and infidelity which prevail about "children" being "the heritage of the Lord," and if these anniversaries are amongst the earliest and the happiest of their associations, we shall have furnished them with abiding arguments against ever arriving at the miserable conclusion that their life is a mistake or a mystery.

Where there is more than one child the first anniversary of the fresh life may be openly kept. The day is to be anticipated, and time, and thought, and money are to be spent in securing the most acceptable gifts. The gifts are to be given together, and when they have possessed sound, motion, and colour, we have fancied that we have seen the monotonousness of babyhood

broken, and, if only for a moment or two, the gifts have made room in a heart that is only a year old. We have been quietly watching, this very day, a little thing that is just three years of age, and who has passed, if large eyes full of fun, unceasing prattle, and a thousand antics, are any criteria, the happiest day of her life. She has lived to learn the meaning of a birthday; and as the impression which is evidently made is not the result of expensive presents or a children's party, but is the simple effect of the day, we imagine this "new sensation" will not be forgotten. She has just been into our study for a kiss on her way to bed, and as we knelt together for a minute and thanked the Father in heaven for her by name, and for the day, it is possible that she may connect her coming into our home, in some childish way of her own, with Him, notwithstanding she was threading her little fingers into the canework of the chair at which we bent.

We acknowledge that we have never been tempted with the morbid feeling that we were not wanted in the world, and we have been in the habit of attributing this happy deliverance, in some measure, to a dressing-table which we found, as soon as we were old enough to get out of bed by ourselves, laden with birthday presents. We have even now as we write, tingling in our fingers' ends, the sensation with which we touched the gifts, as we tried to find out, before the dawn, the secrets which had been so long and so faithfully kept. The letters which in after years came with the presents were read at the break of the day, and whether it was prejudice or not, there was always

one letter which was read twice, and one gift which seemed to be more precious than the others. Perhaps there is a world of truth in the line of the old play—

"*The mother in her office holds the key of the soul.*"

If it be the will of God that none of our little ones should perish, and if He has given to us "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," as the means by which they shall eventually be brought to know Him, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and if we have believed in these truths to the uttermost, then we shall be training our children in the sure and certain hope that they will not become the children of this world, but the children of God. As long as they continue in the nursery, we shall have many things to say to them which they will not be able to receive, but as they increase in years we shall be able, little by little, to unfold to them the faith and hope of the gospel. Year by year, birthday after birthday, we shall have been making good some ground on which we may stand as we plead with them that our Father may be their Father, and our God their God.

The birthday, when we find that the first full revelation may be made to our children of the purpose of God in our relationship to them, will be anticipated by us with unaccustomed preparation. It will come, of course, earlier or later, according to the development of the child, and the effort "to deliver our soul" will vary with the difference in ourselves and in our children. Such an opportunity may possibly present itself on any ordinary day in the year, and we shall only too readily avail

ourselves of it; but, as a rule, we believe that there is a reserve, where there is much deep feeling, which seems to require the justification of some special season for its being broken. Those who are in the habit of respecting their children, and who never have taken any liberties with them, will be conscious of a holy awe, and that rightly, as they take the first steps which they hope will bring them into a child's heart. It is possible that this mode of approach will have some influence on the opening of the door.

Circumstances sometimes will seem to be propitious, though it may be said about this, as about other undertakings, "Where there's a will there's a way." We knew, for instance, where the child happened to be away from the home, on its birthday, a journey of 200 miles was taken which the girl felt was taken specially out of honour and regard for her. The father had found that the time had come when a turning would be taken either to the right or to the left. He had been waiting and watching for

"*The deep nick in Time's restless wheel*
For each one's good, when which nick comes, it strikes."

He saw at once that his daughter would appreciate the feeling which led him to travel so far in order that they might spend the birthday together, and that the very distance which had been between them might be utilized for his purpose. The day passed, and they were much together, but nothing was said. It was midsummer, and the birthday-evening seemed to have been made for the occasion. He spoke, and found it to be one of the

"*Mollia tempora fandi.*"

We are not going to break confidence, nor perhaps would it be possible to put into words the particulars of such an inter-

view. We know that there was a fresh bond binding the girl to her father on earth, and we believe that when he left her she discovered and acknowledged the tie connecting her with her Father in heaven. Birthdays may be times when children are born again.

Days when children have been brought into our homes will remind some of days when they have been taken away. We

will not trust ourselves to speak of what we have felt in the past, or what we feel now. There is, and ever has been, to us a mystery about these early deaths, and, recognizing as we do, the organic unity of the relationship which we sustain to our children, and which they sustain to each other and to us, we hold our peace, believing that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. The accompanying lines of George E. Shirley have helped us, and perhaps may help others :—

"*Are all the memories of life*
Buried when life has fled?
Are we forbid to keep again
The birthdays of the dead?

Time was when each successive year
Brought one bright day of mirth,—
The look'd-for anniversary
Of some belov'd one's birth.

The birthday feasts of childhood's age,
The feasts of riper years,
Remind us of like youthful joys,
Remembered now with tears.

For they with whom those days were spent
Have done with all on earth;
The fond home-circle's broken up
That hailed each day of birth.

Yet as the days come round again
Marked with affection's seal,
Once more we think of those we've lost,
Once more their presence feel.

The blessed spirits now in heaven
May not such cycles keep;
Time makes not out their happiness;
They know not night or sleep.

Yet may they still retain the thoughts
Commemorating birth,
And haply still they keep in heaven
The calendar of earth.

Far off are they, but still towards them
Our loving arms we spread,
And ever in our hearts we'll keep
The birthdays of the dead.

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

V.—CHILDREN'S FAULTS.

"*Parents are o'erseen,*
When, with too strict a rein, they do hold in
Their child's affections; and control that love
Which the powers divine instruct them with:
When in their shallow judgments, they may know,
Affection cross'd, brings misery and woe."

ROBERT TAYLOUR.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. V.—CHILDREN'S FAULTS.

"*A time to keep silent,*
And a time to speak."

However carefully we may have been trained, none of us are without some unhappy and abiding remembrances of unfair or unwise treatment which we received when we were young. All could quote instances in which they were punished unjustly, some manifestation of nature having been corrected as a fault, or some fault having been mistaken for a sin. These offences are to be attributed to the imperfection that necessarily belongs to the best of parents, and will long have been forgiven by us, but we can never forget the spasm of pain with which we received the revelation that our father or mother was not perfect, and the wounds must ever remain as scars. We shall not have suffered in vain if we utilize our childish sorrows, and are led by these painful memories to keep our hearts and hold our tongues with all diligence. We shall not succeed, after all our superior advantages, in preventing other sad associations in the minds of our little ones, but we cannot err in regarding these

records as having been written on the tablet of memory for our admonition.

Without anticipating what we shall have to say in our last paper, "The Parent's Pattern," we may here express our conviction that we shall always do well if we be slow to anger; and if we are forced sometimes to chide, we must never upbraid. We must pity our children, as the Lord pities those who fear Him, knowing their frame, and remembering that they are but dust. The exhortation of the apostle, with its hint as to the sin which easily besets us, may be taken as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. "Fathers, provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This holy reticence and divine silence will lead to thought, and upon reflection we shall discover that we have often been saved from weakening our authority and marring our work, by a thoughtless reproof of innocence, or a foolish effort to suppress nature. We have already acknowledged that there are times when children have to be quiet, but these times are to be few and far between. We may be nervous, and put our veto upon noise; but in doing so, we shall wrong our children and Him who made them. It may be very provoking to us to be constantly disturbed by the constant chattering, or the occasional racket and uproar of the little tribe, but we have only to blame ourselves if we be annoyed by these things. God has connected noise and children, and what He has joined together no one must put asunder. We may be overworking

ourselves day after day, and oversleeping ourselves morning after morning, but these are no reasons why our children should lie still in their beds for hours after they have awaked, or be always told to be quiet whenever they are in our company. Quietness is to be the exception and not the rule, and we are to save some of our nervous energy for home expenditure, and may listen to the morning song as a call to rise.

Children are naturally as full of motion as of sound, and if they be in good health they will be restless as well as noisy. They were not intended to remain for any length of time in one position, and if they be required to stand or sit still, as indeed they must many times a-day, we shall have to accept the muscular irritation which finds its way of escape in the exercise of their hands and feet. The nurse is more to blame, as a rule, than the child, against whom she brings an evil report of its conduct under the process of washing, brushing, and dressing. It would be doubtless easier to comb a wig on a block, or to dress a child if it stood as still as a post, but we must dismiss the case if we find on inquiry, as in all probability we shall, that the child has fulfilled its mission, and that the servant has failed in hers.

The proverbial carelessness of children is often spoken of with regret, and is often considered to be a fault as well as a misfortune. They might indeed be more frequently left to themselves without their getting into mischief, if we could succeed in putting old heads upon young shoulders, but it would remain to be seen whether this unnatural combination would

be an improvement. Of course, to noise and motion, as to all natural instincts, there is a limit, and when the boundary is passed the transgression becomes a fault or a sin; but there is nothing in nature that is wrong, and nothing to be regretted; and this gift of carelessness is one, as we may see, that is to be pruned and trained. It will bring forth fruit.

Children are not necessarily naughty when they are careless. Whosoever will observe the disposition in children to be careless, may discern in it, as in all other divine institutions, the loving-kindness of God. The carelessness of children supposes the carefulness of parents, and it is evidently designed, amongst many other arrangements and ordinances, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents. We come into the world careful for nothing, taking no thought for the morrow, but letting the morrow care for the things of itself, and we might retain this happy propensity, if those who had the early management of us had only the eyes to see and the heart to understand how we might be trained to be children in anxiety as long as we live.

It is evident that we may, except we be constantly upon our guard, mistake some manifestation of nature in our child for a fault. There is no need to make children worse than they are. We shall too soon discover the mind that is in them, for while they retain much that is innocent, and by many of their words and acts, as well as looks, remind us of their divine origin, we shall have early proofs of their sharing with us the damage of the fall. They are not long with us before doing wrong;

they are soon old enough to transgress law, but it will be a long time—say a year and a half—before they are to be corrected. Look at that baby-girl, for instance, angry without a cause (that is, as far as we know), and slapping her mother's face—

> "*A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,*
> *But sweet as English air can make her.*"

You cannot punish a child in arms; you can only divert its attention, and lay up the remembrance of the development, and ponder and pray over it in your heart.

The toddler of a year old, who is making after his sister's doll with tottering steps, and wreaking his puny vengeance upon her cherished toy, will not understand either a lecture or a punishment—

> "*An infant is a selfish sprite,*
> *But what of that? The sweet delight*
> *Which from participation springs,*
> *Is quite unknown to these young things.*
> *We elder children then will smile*
> *At our dear little John awhile,*
> *And bear with him, until he see*
> *There is a sweet felicity*
> *In pleasing more than only one—*
> *Dear little, craving, selfish John.*"

Even when "the time to keep silence" has elapsed, and "the time to speak" has come, we shall have to pass over many transgressions. If we are strict to mark all wrong-doing, we shall be always finding fault, and our children will be in a condition of chronic naughtiness and perpetual disgrace. If, in addition to this severity, we are severe in our words and our punishments, we shall find that all the self-respect, and sense

of truth, and honour in our children will be destroyed. We shall find ourselves, eventually, surrounded by little liars and hypocrites and slaves.

The evil that is in children is no more to be eradicated by fault-finding and force than it is in adults. It is only by the goodness of our heavenly Father that we are led to repentance, and it is only little by little that old things pass away, and all things become new. The much-desired reform is to be a life-work; and just as we shall succeed in their mental education by striving to make them students rather than scholars, so our nursery nurture is to be in the direction of character rather than conduct, and it will be so if it be the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Forced obedience and premature piety have not been without their influence on the tone of the Christianity of the day. There is a finality in its practice, and a hardness in its theology, which may be very easily traced to the spirit of bondage which has possessed many a religious home. The commandments of God are often interpreted by fear, and attempted to be kept from policy. Thus it may be that there are those who are already well-nigh tired of their religion, and feel but little more interest in it, than in the studies which they finished when they left school. Any training that may induce within our children the love of truth, will be likely to lend them an impetus that will lead them all through their lives to continue in the pursuit of knowledge, and it will be only so far as we have succeeded in bringing before them the love of God, that they will know anything of a happy and endless career of spiritual progress.

Nursery nurture is a growth and not a manufacture. There is, after all, but little that we can do for our children ; there is always very much that must be done for them by God. We may be afraid to sit still and do nothing, and this may lead us to speak, though we know that talking will do more harm than good, or it may lead us to do something, because we feel that something should be done. We cannot, however, manufacture good children, any more than we can make that which has been sown in their hearts to spring forth. Mending matters often makes matters worse. Gathering up the tares, as the sad experience of some pious parents has proved, only leads to the rooting up also of the wheat with them.

God sends seasons for silence and He gives times in which we may speak. He guides us, according to His promise, with His counsel ; and when we are taught of Him we shall know when and how to address ourselves to our children. The following case would seem to suggest that we may, as parents, safely rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and that one of the ordinary instances of carelessness in a child may become an opportunity, when wisely taken, of occupying a place in the heart and memory which we may keep for ever. It happened thus :—A father who was busy preparing for a public meeting was writing letters to the friends whose presence was expected, and summoning one of his children, gave her the letters in good time for the morning post. The whole tribe were on the point of starting for their morning walk and ride, and with the usual glee and careless fun the cavalcade went on its way. After ten

minutes or so, the girl who had been entrusted with the errand returned, and, knocking at the study door, announced the loss of one of the letters. Not a word was spoken, and the lost letter was re-written, the child having had the sense to bring back with her the letters that remained. The post was saved, and the father having been kept from

upbraiding his child, determined, after seeking counsel and help, to make this instance of carelessness a special case. The fault having been committed before all, the dinner-time was chosen as the time for the remarks he had decided to make. "Maria," said he, "it was very clever of you to bring back those letters, and to bring them back at once, for had you posted them I could not have told which was the letter you had lost, and had you delayed I could not have sent any of them before the evening. I have often myself forgotten to post letters, and have found that I have been carrying them about with me in my pocket; now, having learnt a lesson from my carelessness, I keep them in my hand, and I make my way at once to the office, and I dare say, after what has happened this morning, you will agree with me that this is the best plan to adopt. Then, again, you will have learnt that when we get ourselves into any trouble there is often something that we may do, if we have our wits about us. However bad matters may be, there is a way of making the best of them. I was glad, very glad, Maria, that you were not afraid to come at once and tell me; and if ever, even when you are a woman, you get into trouble, come at once to me, and if you cannot come, always write. But there, Maria,' I may be gone where no letter will reach me; and I have been thinking that perhaps God kept me from speaking quickly and harshly to you this morning, that you might be disposed not only to trust and to come to me, but, what is far better, to trust to Him and to go boldly to His throne of grace."

The fewer words we utter, and the fewer laws we make,

the fewer faults we shall find in our children. Wherever there is authority there is sure to be disobedience, and if anything be within the reach of a child, it is almost certain to be touched or taken. Prevention is better than cure, and with a wise foresight and loving providence, knowing what is in them, we may often succeed in keeping forbidden things out of sight and out of mind. Petty larcenies will be of rare occurrence where there is pocket-money, and telling tales or making excuses will never become habits in homes where the parents are "slow to speak, slow to wrath."

Children, as well as adults, are to be treated as innocent till they are proved to be guilty, and before the execution of any punishment, we must be in the possession of the evidence of the wrong-doing and be able to bring it home to the little culprit, and to justify its infliction to the conscience of the whole home. We have, rankling in our memory, an incident that we have often recurred to with wonder and regret. Moving from London into the country, we inhabited a house that had a garden attached to it, in which were some apple-trees. Soon after our removal, an uncle, who was as great a Cockney as any of us, came on a visit, and brought us into the following trouble:—We had been playing, as a boy, before breakfast, in the garden, the morning after his arrival, and on his coming out in his slippers to spy out the land, he found under one of the trees a large codlin apple lying on the ground, and taxed us with knocking it off the tree. He had never, it would appear, met with such a thing as a windfall, and, unfortu-

nately for us, the experience of our parents was equally limited. We were convicted on circumstantial evidence, and suffered punishment, because there was more in nature than was dreamt of in our home philosophy. We remember that we were finally pardoned at the intercession of our uncle, and that we received the announcement with ill-suppressed anger.

There is an instinct in us, as well as in our children, which seems to resent the interference of any with the home discipline who do not belong to it, and it would seem advisable to give some consideration to these hints; at any rate, if we are ever called to act judicially on the testimony of a stranger, we should take special precaution that we do not act under a mistake.

If the case be clear against a child, and its own welfare and that of the home demands punishment, then the character of the punishment should be determined by the disposition and temperament of the child, and the particular need of the home. The proportion of the punishment is to be in some keeping with the nature of the offence. It is possible that the exigencies of the home, in the following case, required that some exhibition should be made as a warning to others, but we have never been able to understand, much less to accept, the justice of another of the sentences which was passed upon us in our boyhood. We had gone with our younger brother on our weekly errand, to take a newspaper to a neighbouring farm-house. It was the first of September, and we arrived at the door just as the farmer and the landlord, with their guns and dogs, were turning out for their day's shooting. We were invited to join the sport, and in

an evil moment accepted the invitation. It was a bright, happy, red-letter day for us; but on reaching home in the evening, we found that we had done wrong, for we ought to have come back and asked permission, and after an address, in which the judge laboured to prove the enormity of the offence, we were confined for two days to our bed-room. This was no instance of playing truant, for it was not school-time; and we imagine that we might fairly have been excused, not only on the ground that we were boys, but that if we had returned to ask leave we should have lost our chance.

At school we expect more injustice than at home, and while we may, choosing, as we are constantly obliged to do, between two evils, decide to expose our boy to the wrongs which are connected with a public education, we cannot but regret their existence. A friend told us the other day of what had just happened to his lad, who had been for a year or two at one of the London collegiate institutions, and had taken and kept, till this event occurred, the first place. A certain number of good marks were given for punctual attendance, and for the preparation at home of a Greek exercise. The boy, as usual, was in time, and he had his exercise in his satchel. Being sent away by one of the ushers, immediately on his arrival in the school-room, to some other part of the premises, he left his satchel behind him for the moment, and on his return he found that one of his mates had taken out his exercise and was engaged in copying it. At this juncture the master arrived, and his eye caught and understood the transaction. The sen-

tence was passed without the case being heard. Each of the boys was to lose five marks, and thus the charm of the school life of my friend's boy was broken, for he had never before been in any disgrace. Further, in the course of the morning the boy who had stolen the exercise was rewarded; the exercise was found to be correct, and all correct exercises were counted worthy of merit.

Any one who will take the pains to make inquiries, will find that nearly every one whom he meets can tell him some tale of injustice from which they suffered when they were young, and that an analysis of the various cases will show that we are very likely to err in finding fault through haste, ignorance, or anger. Giving a child the benefit of a doubt will often secure the ends of justice, and may preserve their recollection of our good name from any slur.

It may be well, for another reason, to pass over children's faults without much notice, or at any rate without severity, for there are children's *sins* and children's *crimes;* and

> "*If little faults, proceeding on distemper,*
> *Shall not be winked at, how shall we stretch our eye*
> *When capital crimes, chewed, swallowed, and digested,*
> *Appear before us?*"

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

VI.—CHILDREN'S SUNDAYS.

"The Sundays of man's life,
Threaded together on Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday, heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and ripe,
More plentiful than hope."

HERBERT.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. VI.—CHILDREN'S SUNDAYS.

"*Mercy and not sacrifice.*"

THE Sunday question, happily for our children, is one of the questions of the day which has been fairly re-opened for discussion, and there is no class in the country which will derive greater advantages, if the investigation should lead to a better understanding of the origin, and the obligation, and the observance of the Lord's Day.

The soundness of the scholarship, and the breadth of the piety of those who are taking the first part in the debate, are guarantees for our being eventually put into possession of the truth, and if perplexity and difficulty have prevailed as widely as is supposed amongst those who have had the management of children in homes and schools, parents and teachers will be among the foremost to return their thanks for any results which will throw a clearer and steadier light upon their duty.

For some years matters have been in a most unsatisfactory state, and the most pernicious effects have been the consequence. When the puritanical theory and practice respecting the day were honestly accepted as the standards of opinion and con-

duct, false and impracticable though they were, those who adopted them had yet the merit and power which belong to all who have principles and act upon them. There has been, however, for the last generation or more, a secret suspicion that the Sunday is not the Sabbath, and this smothered doubt being ignored, with some others, by religious teachers, has been left to smoulder, demoralizing those who have been obliged to continue a course of training in which they did not fully believe, and preventing, in those who have been brought up during the interval, the formation of any early faith in the sacredness of the institution.

We are just now between two evils: on the one hand there are good and earnest people who, through ignorance or timidity, would strive to preserve the past by enforcing the judaistic observance of the Lord's Day; and on the other hand, there are some who will evidently do their utmost, in this period of transition, to introduce the continental Sunday. There is nothing to fear if there be amongst us a belief and love of the truth, and while it is not given to many to guide and form general opinion, none of us are without our influence upon popular movements; and of all those who are interested in Christianity, none can render greater service than those who have the opportunity of giving to the next generation their first impressions.

As parents, we cannot afford to wait the issue of the present discussion, allowing the question to remain open, for it presses upon us for immediate settlement. The Sunday difficulty re-

turns regularly every week. We must make up our minds at once whether we shall keep a Jewish Sabbath, or the Lord's Day, or a holiday. The children, for instance, will be getting out their playthings, or if we should put their toys where they cannot be found, they will be improvising games, and creating amusement out of nothing. Are we to teach the catechism—Q. "*Can those be thought to keep holy the Sabbath-day who play upon it?*"—A. "*By no means.*" Are they to learn the hymn in which they are taught that to play on Sundays is a sin?

We have either to put a veto upon the playfulness of our children, or to tolerate and guide it. If we interfere with their amusements, they will look to us, and that rightly, for a reason of our doing so. If we permit their play to pass without reproof, we shall injure ourselves as well as them, if we believe that little children who play on Sundays are Sabbath-breakers, for we shall sin against our own consciences, and we shall also show our children that we are careless about their committing what we consider to be a crime. If it be the nurture and the admonition of the Lord that this propensity is to be wholly subdued by our little ones once a-week for a whole day, then we must begin their training in this matter from their cradle; no time is to be lost if they are ever to attain to this condition of self-control. We shall then have to mind our children the whole day, or set others to watch them, for they will begin to play as soon as they are left to themselves, and will be always forgetting, with their proverbial carelessness, any prohibition or punishment they may have received. They will

play at home if we leave them behind us when we go to a place of worship; they will play in church if we take them there; and if they have nothing better to amuse them, they will play at church between the services.

The instinct which leads little children to play will develope when they become boys and girls into a disposition to enjoy themselves. All children, whatever their age, have a tendency to be happy, and we shall find the Sunday difficulty will increase with the increase of years. A family is never more likely to be happy than when they are all together, and as the children become old enough to go to school, and the father is from home every other day in the week, it will be only on the Sunday that they all meet, and there will be little probability of its sabbatical observance except in those homes where the children have never played on that day.

If children are good on the Sunday only when they are quiet, we may make up our minds that our children will be as naughty as we were when we were young. They will play, as we did, with fingers, or buttons, or strings, when forced to sit still; and we shall find that, with the same forecast as we manifested, they have hidden some plaything in their pocket, and are whiling away the time by fingering the forbidden toy. They will be as deceitful and as unhappy as we remember to have been, and will be equally as glad when the congregation breaks up and the Sabbath has an end.

There are many other difficulties which have been found to belong to Sundays in their relation to children, but before

touching them it may be worth our while to inquire whether this first embarrassment has any necessary existence. We may fairly argue that we must have missed our way, if we find ourselves at the very outset of our career in a *cul de sac*, and that we must have made some very great mistake about our vocation if we seem to be called to do despite to the instincts of nature, or to sin against our conscience. It is probable, and we believe it is certain, that if we turn to the law and to the testimony, and take the trouble to think, and have the moral courage to act upon our convictions, we shall discover we have erred, because we have not known the Scriptures nor the power of God, and that there are no insuperable difficulties in the management of our children on this or any other day of the week. Admitting, as we have done, once and again, our grave responsibilities as parents, and the ceaseless care and devotion demanded by our children, we still hold the opinion that there is nothing that we are called to do for them, from their birth to their marriage, which needs to be regarded as perplexing or impossible. If we intend to spare ourselves, or if we have any ideas and plans of our own which we have determined to carry out at all hazards, or if we suffer ourselves to be hampered by some of the religious and social opinions which prevail around us—if, in short, we are unlearned or unstable, and wrest the Scriptures, or make them void through the traditions of the elders, then our home-life will be full of difficulties, and we shall be often brought by them to our wit's end. But receiving our children as a trust from God, understanding and remembering

the subordinate position in which we stand to Him, and taking His word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path as we nurse them for Him, we shall be from time to time relieved from any perplexity by the revelation of His will, and delivered from all fear by the assurance of His love. His word, His grace, and His providence will be sufficient for us.

The supposition that "children must not play on Sundays," with other kindred opinions respecting the proper observance of the Lord's Day, may be easily traced to the confusion that has existed between the Sunday and the Sabbath. Now we know from the Scriptures that the Lord's Day was acknowledged and observed by the apostles and the early church as distinct from the Sabbath, and that the followers of Christ were expressly forbidden to keep the Jewish day.* We may learn also from the earliest ecclesiastical records that the Christian and Mosaic institutions were never confounded, and that the confusion between the Sunday and the Sabbath commenced at the time when the church became connected with the state, under Constantine. The civil legislation of the 5th century, the casuistry of the middle ages, and the reaction from the Reformation, seem to be the sources of our Sabbatarianism. It was left, however, for the Puritans to make most of the ground which is held by many in our day for the observance of Sunday as a Sabbath. The publication of the Book of Sports, legalizing certain games, drove those wise men mad, and in their zeal for God they wrested the Scriptures concerning the seventh day of

* Col. ii. 16.

the week and applied them to the first, adding, in the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees, their own commandments, and turning the day which the early church welcomed with singing and observed with joy into an institution too grievous to be borne. We need not notice, as far as our present purpose is concerned, their idea that "*any presumptuous profanation of the Lord's Day should be punished with death*," but in their prohibition—"*No one shall run on the Sabbath-day, or walk in his garden or elsewhere, except reverently to and from meeting*"—we may perhaps perceive the origin of the opinions that "going for a walk" and "children playing on Sundays" are inconsistent with the spirit in which the Lord's Day should be observed.

It might be of some moment for us to consider how far the present disregard of the Lord's Day, the neglect of public worship, and the well-known but unacknowledged weariness and *ennui* of the Sunday, are to be attributed to the teaching and the training of the past generation. The utter neglect by many of the Lord's Day, may possibly be explained by the fact that they were forced when they were children to keep it with more than the strictness of a Jewish Sabbath. The masses who turn the day into a holiday may have amongst them those who sat in weary rows assisting at religious services which were intended only for adults. A search amongst the crowds of Sunday pleasure-seekers might result in the discovery of the lost tribes of Sabbath-school children.

Those who make the weather, or any other such hindrance, an excuse for their absence from the house of God, who look

round at the clock during divine service, and whose religiousness, such as it is, is a matter of duty rather than love, may not be far wrong in attributing the fact that they have "enough religion to make them miserable, and not enough to make them happy," to their having been unfortunately the children of parents who belonged to the straitest sect of the Pharisees. Even those of us who only in adult life have been brought to the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God, must not resolve entirely the hateful and hated sluggishness of our hearts into the remains of their natural depravity, if our parents acted as schoolmasters in their efforts to bring us to Christ. We shall be often creeping unwillingly into our closets, and shall catch ourselves in the old habit of looking at the length of the chapter in our daily portion, even till the day of our death, if we have had our tasks given us out of the Word of God, and have been sent as children back to our bedrooms to say our prayers when we had omitted the duty.

We are forming the religious tastes and opinions and habits of our children by the training we are giving them, and as we who are now old find that we cannot depart from the way in which we were first taught to tread except by the greatest effort, and even then that we are constantly returning to the old paths, we may see that we can hardly inflict a greater injury upon our little ones than teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

The words of our Lord—"the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"—though uttered in reference to

the Jewish Sabbath, will furnish us with all the light we need in reference to "Children's Sundays." If the Sabbath was to be subservient to human needs, much more may the Lord's Day be regarded as an institution of mercy rather than sacrifice. If the weakness and wants of adults were considered under the first dispensation, the instincts of children are certainly recognised by Christianity. If men were not, because they could not, wholly to abstain from all work on the Sabbath, children are not wholly to abstain from all play on the Sunday. There is always a certain amount of work that is done in every Christian home on the Lord's Day, and if there be children in it, there must be a certain amount of playfulness. We need not, except we choose, make it a sin for children to play on Sundays, any more than the Puritans were under any obligation to legislate that "*no one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep house, cut hair, or shave on the Sabbath-day.*"

The Lord's Day is a day that the Lord hath made, in which we may rejoice and be glad, and if we love Him, our little ones will soon learn and will never forget its origin; and if we spend it in harmony with the remembrance of His resurrection from the dead, and in the expectation of His coming to us week after week, they will have an early and an abiding conviction of the sacredness of Sunday.

There is no necessity for the children's Sunday to be a holiday any more than a Sabbath. We need not encourage, much less enforce games. There is no need to issue a book of sports either in a country or a home. The children will be

happy enough if the disposition that leads them to play be only acknowledged and guided. Again and again during the day they may, as indeed they must, be left to themselves, and as it is their custom to turn all their experience of life into nursery plays, you must not be surprised if you find that some stray doll is being taught a hymn and examined in its knowledge of Scripture, nor must you be shocked if the sounds of singing and preaching make you aware that a service is being held in the nursery. If we know how to conduct a child's service that is equally or more popular, we need not be jealous of the influence of these young preachers. They may, one day, become preachers indeed, and their early gifts of talking to vacant chairs may eventually be of some use to them, when, on wet Sundays, they will have to preach to empty pews.

It must not be our aim in nursery nurture to make our children keep the Sunday in the same manner as ourselves. We have never to treat them as if they were adults. This canon seems to be constantly forgotten, both in their religious and secular education. We have to work for future rather than present results, and we fulfil our mission, for instance, in reference to Sundays, if we can make it the happiest day of their week. At first this will be accomplished by new frocks, new hats and bonnets, and new shoes; by the whole home dining together, and some special dish marking the day. In our case it is a "Sunday pudding." Sunday dessert is almost a *sine quâ non*, and if the little ones are sent in turns, as we were, with portions for the servants, the Sunday is likely to be re-

membered, not only by the strangers within the house, but by the little ones who are trained, week by week, to be givers of gifts.

Our Sunday leisure is to be occupied by extra nursing, and if a fresh comer has occupied the throne of the old baby, and you have been in the habit of taking the little thing who has been deposed on this day on your knee, you will find that it will become a red-letter day in his calendar. It is at these times, on Sunday afternoons, when we have our children in our arms, that we may begin to speak of Him who spoke of children, as He took them up, as belonging to the kingdom of heaven. A few coloured Bible pictures, a child's hymn sung to a child's tune, and a child's prayer, will answer the highest purposes. A Sunday with such an hour in it will never be regarded either as a weariness or a holiday.

As the children increase in years, our work will become more easy. They will be old enough to walk with us to a place of worship, and if we are wise enough to choose our minister as we choose our house, they will soon begin to listen to what they hear, and, listening, they will not find much difficulty in keeping still. If we are obliged to take them where there is but little or nothing in the service that they can understand, we must take them but once a-day, and they must have a service at home.

The day is to be occupied, as far as it can be, as an opportunity for setting forth Christ evidently before our children. It is to be emphatically the Lord's Day. He is to be expected. His coming is to be the common topic. Who He is and what

He has done is to be the subject of conversation. The children's Bible is to be the four gospels. Week after week, by pictures, by prayers, by maps, by pleadings, by harmonies, by all and every means, the life and love of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are to be commended to the consciences of our little ones as in the sight of God. Their adult faith in Christ is likely to be unfeigned, if they are taught from their youth up the Scriptures that testify of Him.

Sunday tasks and Sunday lessons, while of use in occupying part of the Lord's Day, may perhaps be regarded as doing more harm than good. We believe that in very many things children are much better when they are left to themselves. An acquaintance with the Word of God is, of course, to be encouraged, but it is a question whether any portion of it should be given them to learn. The Bible is not to become a common lesson-book. The Sunday is to be so far a holiday that there is to be no school. Any voluntary work, either in writing out, or learning or harmonising Scripture, will of course be hailed with great delight, and the practice can be readily sustained without any compulsion. The voluntaryism of Christianity, however, is one of the first truths which we have to teach.

It is not given to all to gain grace and favour with children. There are diversities of gifts, and where one of the parents is the more richly endowed, then the question as to the leadership of the home service is settled. In our case it was conducted by the mother, and as it was anticipated week after week with pleasure, and has been for years remembered with gratitude,

we are able to reproduce the scene and the service, though the old house has been long pulled down, and the voice that first found a way to our heart is now to be heard only by ourselves. The time was Sunday evening. The place was one of a suite of wainscoted rooms which was never entered by any one but our mother, and which may be best described by the term "closet," if the word be received in the Saviour's sense. It was a place where prayer was wont to be made, and, like other such places, it was a place where prayer was wont to be answered. It was here that one and another heart was opened, so that they attended to the things which were spoken. The duodecimo edition of Draper's Bible

Stories was the nominal text-book, but while for the first few moments we might be looking at the picture, we soon became interested in the teaching, and were eventually carried away by the passionate pleading which followed. The effect seemed to be the same on all; and we feel as we write the hot tear that fell on our hand as the mother poured out her soul in prayer.

The service was followed by a supper, which consisted almost entirely of things which she had made on purpose for us, and our Sundays always closed at a round table, at which all the children were seated, and the mother waited as a servant.

TWIGS FOR NESTS.

VII.—CHILDREN'S HOBBIES.

"*Yet of the various tasks mankind employ*
'Tis sure the hardest, leisure to enjoy;
For one who knows to taste this godlike bliss,
What countless swarms of vain pretenders miss!
Though each dull plodding thing, to ape the wise,
Ridiculously grave, for leisure sighs
(His boasted wish from busy scenes to run),
Grant him that leisure, and the fool's undone."

MELMOTH.

NURSERY NURTURE.

No. VII.—CHILDREN'S HOBBIES.

"*Gather up the fragments,*
That nothing be lost."

"ALL work and no play," we are told, "makes Jack a dull boy;" but those of us who are always with children find that however carefully and cleverly we may intermingle amusement with the tasks of both "Jack" and his sister, they are often as tired of play as they are of work, and for the time seem to be possessed with the demon of dulness. Our children are little men and women, subject to like passions as we are, and are open to the same temptations that easily beset us. They suffer

from the spirit of ennui, and would be as ready as any of us to quote if they knew them, the well-worn words—

"*How weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable,*
Seem to me all the uses of this world."

A girl, as a rule, is not so soon or so often tired and tiresome as a boy; she has resources, perhaps in herself, and certainly in her scissors and paper, and needle and thread, in the dressing of her dolls and the management of their home, which are denied to her brother; but notwithstanding all her domestic cares and pleasures, there will be times when the most notable and patient of our little matrons will become listless and restless, and puzzle and pain us with the weary question "What shall I do?"

Limiting, as we do now-a-days, and that wisely, the lessons to a few hours, we leave a large margin of leisure; and while the daily walk and the daily play, and the occasional treat, may generally give a fulness to the young life, there are blanks in summer mornings and winter evenings, wet weather and holidays, for which some occupation should be found. There are hours when children must and ought to be left very much to themselves, and it is most desirable that when they find they have nothing to do, there should be something which they like to do more than anything else. They have to be trained to be accustomed to leisure; and we shall have rendered them a great service if we save them from our habits of intemperate work, without exposing them to the mischiefs of idleness or the miseries of ennui.

"Children's hobbies," like most other questions relating to our homes, include the future as well as the present. We cannot divine the destiny of our children; they may live long or die early. Our daughters may marry, and our sons may be called to pass their days in some engrossing business or profession; or there may not appear to be any necessity laid upon them to live for anything or any one; they may be single women or independent men; and if so, they will thank us for our nurture, if we have so brought them up that they are able to fall back upon themselves, and find that they are never "less alone than when alone," or more inclined to be busy than when they have nothing to do. The child that never tires of some self-elected object and some self-imposed task, is the father of the man who will never be tiresome either to himself or his friends. The old lady who finds her daily interest and good temper, by spending her strength (by reason of which she has passed threescore years and ten) in her garden and greenhouses, would be able to tell you of her girlish taste for flowers and early botanical studies, and might show you some antique albums containing specimens of the flora of the neighbourhood where she was born, and of most, if not all, of the places which she has visited. There is a book of "Verbal Classification" which is well-known and well-used by those who write and speak much, and who are seeking fit and apt expressions for their ideas, which must have given to the old man who compiled it a rare opportunity of losing and saving his good old age. Having made "words" his hobby for fifty years, he has

gathered up in this basket fragments which would otherwise have been lost, and many of us who are often at a loss for a word would have been left to want.

The boat, scooped out and shaped with a sixpenny knife, the result of much labour in many spare moments and many half-holidays, may not, at last, prove itself more seaworthy than other vessels which have cost as much pains and a great deal more money. The pump or other mechanical contrivances, constructed upon principles known only to the inventors, may be considered to be as great failures, by practical men, as others that are lost in the limbo of the Patent Office. Our servants may complain to us about "the dirt and the mess" made by some young master in his quasi-chemical experiments, and if we are led to explore the laboratory we may discover some silver spoon, or best knife, or some other household article which has been pressed into the service of science and has been fearfully abused. You may some day, as we did, light upon some MSS. (if indeed that term might be applied to what for the greater part had been printed), and find that one of your children has been writing "The Story of my Life:" there would be much, of course, to be altered in the orthography and grammar and punctuation, if not in the composition of the story, before it was further printed; but a hidden source of pleasure and power might be revealed to you, as it was to us, in the judgment shown in the selection of the subject and the art concealed in the manner of its treatment. The series of drawings made from the woodcuts of some "Book of

Animated Nature" may not have any money value, seeing that they are neither originals nor good copies, and none of the pictures in the private gallery of water-colours would bear to be exhibited in any other light than that in which they were painted; but these and the many other products of the leisure and genius of children, if collected into a children's exhibition, might furnish much material for the discussion of the question of children's hobbies. No thoughtful visitor would regard such a collection as so much waste of time or mere child's-play. The little ones would be seen to have worked, and to have worked with a will; and when the many quiet and happy hours of the past, and the pleasing prospects for the future, were taken into consideration, they would not be judged to have laboured in vain and spent their strength for nought.

An exposition of the products of the leisure hours of all classes might exercise as favourable an influence on our social life as the Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations did upon our manufactures. We have already proved to us that working-men, notwithstanding the drudgery of their work, can, if they will, find both the time and the spirit to cultivate their personal tastes. The bearing of this 'busy-idleness' on the home life is very evident, and some acknowledgment of its existence, and perhaps some trifling and indirect guidance and encouragement, might be as advantageous to our people as to our children. In and out of doors we should all be happier if we knew better what to do with ourselves when we had nothing to do.

There is an aspect of the question which will have pre-

sented itself to those who have been taught to leave the standpoint where some men and things look 'common and unclean;' as for ourselves, we believe what has been written for our learning and comfort, that "*all* power belongeth unto God," and that all have, without respect of persons, some portion of power falling to them. We are each in the possession of some talent, and this revelation throws a very cheering light upon our own lot and the lot of our children. These powers are not given us

"*To rust in us unused;*"

and if we employ them according to their nature and tendency, we shall find from their exercise some recreation and refreshment, and may conclude, and that justly, that it is the intention of our Maker that we shall be happy.

Our life here is to be truly, what it is, full of toil and trial. We live under a law of labour, for six days out of seven we have to work. None can escape the tribulation of time, for we are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Our strength and patience are to be found in the revelation that these things are the will of God concerning us, and in the life and immortality that are brought to light by the gospel. We are not, however, left only to the work of this world and the hope of the world to come. There is something else given to us, and this is to comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands. We have power given us to labour and to get wealth; and we argue, therefore, that labour and capital are ordinances of God. We have the promise of power to lay hold on eternal life, and

we believe, therefore, that God willeth not the death of any, but would that all might be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. We have our work and our religion, and we have them both from God, and therefore we believe in their divinity; but we have other things from him, and these, for the same reason, should be sacred to us. There are times to rest as well as times to work, times to laugh as well as times to weep, and these times are common to all; "He giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Holidays as well as holy days, are of God. The very heathen believed this—

"*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit;*"

and it was no superstition, for the apostle Paul, in speaking to them, exhorts them not only to associate their "food" but their "gladness" with God; and the apostle James reminds us that "every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

There are ordinary, external, and unchanging sources of amusement and pleasure that are common to all men, and have been so, and will continue as long as the earth remaineth; but there are, in addition, provisions that have been made in persons themselves for their own enjoyment. There is, or there has been, in each of us, some taste or propensity which has been evidently given to us for our own gratification. It may be some mental faculty, which it is no trouble to us to exercise, but only a pleasure. Or it may be some special correspondence between the mind and one of the senses. "Naturally," as it is said, or, speaking more correctly, "divinely,"

we have been endowed with some talent, it may be for art or science or mechanism. These instincts, in sundry ways and divers manners, have been divided by the Father in heaven amongst all his children, whether they have been prodigals or not. He has given to each severally as He would, so that it might be said of these as well as of other things, "Even as the Lord gave to every man;" "giving to all richly to enjoy;" "and whosoever will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

We are thoroughly furnished for our career. We are called to get our own livelihood, to work out our own salvation, and to be happy in ourselves, and we may find that for these things, as for all others that pertain unto life and godliness, God is working in us to will and to do His good pleasure. We have within us, if we live lawfully, renewed day by day, those various powers by the exercise of which we may lead a complete and a happy life. We are not born to starve, nor are we sent into this world to be miserable, nor are we taken out of it to be lost. There is no necessity laid upon us to be the victims of ennui, any more than to become beggars or to be wandering outcasts in eternity. If we work we shall eat; if we believe we shall be saved; and if we cultivate some special faculty with which we have been endowed by God, we shall find that zest and happiness, that satisfaction and rest, which, in their way, are as necessary to us as our daily bread and our everlasting salvation.

Difficulties in homes, like other difficulties in life, will often,

if not always, be found to be the result of our having forgotten God. We have said already that there is nothing that need perplex and discourage us in the management of our children. There is always something that ought to be done for them, and sometimes it seems impossible to discover what it is, or if we see what ought to be done, it seems impossible to do it. But what is impossible with man is possible with God. We have our work, and it is given us by one who furnishes the material and offers His help. God does not call us to make bricks without straw. He gives us all things in and for our children, and does not leave us, but works mightily in us, as He does in all who believe. And it is because He is able and willing to do more exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, that the nurture and admonition of the Lord will be found to be sufficient for the guidance of any parent and the management of any child.

Take, for instance, our position when our children are tired both of their work and their play. They want they say to do something—something that is not work and that is not play. Now in that child who may be troubling us with the weary question "What shall I do?" there is the latent power to interest and amuse itself. It has within it—sealed it may be, as yet, or blocked up, perhaps through our carelessness—a hidden spring of pleasure which might be an unfailing source of refreshment. The water is there, and it may be reached. It may take more or less time and trouble and thought to discover the particular pursuit for which a child has a natural taste, but therein lies

part of our work : we have to elicit, to educate, to draw out the latent powers of our little ones, and we need not regret any expenditure of ourselves ; and whatever the result may be, we are to remember that we have to make the best of our children, and that they will have to make the best of themselves.

There are children as well as babies who are but little if any trouble. Many boys and girls will amuse themselves for hours when they are left alone. There are men and women who become rich, or religious, or literary, or artistic, and who are under no obligation to their parents or their teachers. The genius and instincts of children differ in degree as well as in kind. Here and there we meet with those who are early conscious of the possession of extraordinary power, and they may be left very nearly, if not quite, to the impetus which they receive from its exercise. There are others, and they form the great majority, who have received only a single talent, and that often but a common and ordinary one, and it is lying unused because its value and use are not perceived by them or acknowledged by others.

Apparently it is not much that is left for us to do for our children ; it is but little in any case, and in this it is perhaps the least of all. A little help, however, may be a great service. " Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth." Some word or sight in season, some occasional or indirect encouragement, will be sufficient in most cases to make a child exchange its hobby-horse for a hobby, and when it is fairly mounted, with a little discreet oversight and a few hints, it will teach itself to

learn the luxury of riding. Many have thus been mounted for life, and the pleasures of childhood have continued to be the recreation of manhood, and the solace of age.

The drawings which have no drawing in them, the fancy-work in which there is neither a picture nor a pattern, but a helpless attempt at both, the expensive tool-box which was given to a boy who had no mechanical instinct, the closed piano, the empty aquarium, the MSS. in prose and verse, the sundry collections of coins, antiques, and insects, the fishing tackle, the bat, the library of dusty books, and the countless other broken-down hobbies which are to be found in the drawers, and closets, and lumber-rooms of most homes, are proofs that many, if not all, have tried to amuse themselves and have not been able. These failures are greatly to be regretted, and easily to be explained. Any who are acquainted with the principles and laws of recreation would find no difficulty with any case of "tædium vitæ," and they would be able to give a very satisfactory explanation to any one whose desire for an old pleasure had failed.

We may get hold of the wrong hobby as well as the wrong horse. Hobbies as well as horses differ in their build, and therefore in their pace. "The term 'hobby' is thought to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon '*hoppan;*' if so, and it seems probable, the name must have been applied to the horse from its pace—an easy ambling pace, neither trot nor gallop, in which the feet are carried unevenly and not straight out."* A

* Richardson.

hobby should be neither work nor play, but something that contains the elements of both. There must be in it a curious and indefinable but pleasant admixture of exercise and rest. A pursuit must be strong enough to carry a man, and its pace must be easy to him, or it will never become his hobby. No one buys a horse for his own riding without knowing something about it, and trying whether it suits him. Now we cannot always choose our business, the way in which we shall gain our livelihood, but we shall have only ourselves to blame if we are not in possession of some pad (it may be a pegasus, for hobbies appear to have wings as well as legs) which seems to have been, as indeed it was, made for us.

A child must choose its own hobby, and it will then be likely to keep to it when it is old. If a boy has eyes that cannot see, or if there be no special correspondence between his eyes and his hand, he should never be encouraged to draw, at any rate for his amusement. No books or masters, and no determination on our part or his own, will be able to give him any real or lasting pleasure in "form." The hour's drawing-lesson is "work" to him, and his consciousness of effort, and his unconsciousness of success, are distressing rather than pleasurable. The pursuit may be persisted in for a longer or shorter period, quite as much to the amazement of the rider himself as to the spectators, but the time will come when he will have an opportunity to dismount, and he will do so with a will, being heartily tired of making himself miserable in trying to be happy. The countless variety of objects lying around us and our children,

free to all, and adapted to the calibre of any, will prevent both us and them from entertaining the error that there is nothing that can furnish them with what they want.

Our children must ride their hobbies in their own way. If we are doing our best with and for them in other matters, we may leave them very much to themselves as they become engrossed with their favourite pursuits. They will soon and certainly discover their deficiencies, and we may silently make some kindred science one of their lessons, and they will of themselves learn to apply its principles and laws to their play. There is, in all of us, a dislike to compulsion and oversight, and we are seldom really interested in anything that we are obliged to do. We do not meet with many who take "con amore" to their daily work. The pleasure we derive from riding our hobbies, is partly to be attributed to the fact that we are under no obligation to ride or even keep them, and that when we do, we are consulting our own tastes. A pursuit that carries us away from the high road of life, with its yokes and burdens, its responsibilities and rules, is as precious as it is pleasant. We return, whether we are children or men, to the desk in the school, or the counting-house, or the study, renewed in the spirit of our mind, more able and more willing to compete for the prizes that are set before us. There must be some method in our madness as we turn from beaten tracks, and try a gallop across country; we must always remember that we are riding, and never forget that our hobby is not a horse. Many things may be lawful and even expedient for an

amateur which would be the ruin of a student, and we shall only dishearten ourselves or our children if we are expecting results from play that are only given to work.

If, while the child is under authority, he be taught to remember times and seasons, and trained to the punctual performance of his school duties, and is leading a regular home life, he will not be likely to forget himself when he becomes his own master, and suffer his hobby to run away with him. Here again we have presented to us another part of our vocation, as it touches the recreation of our children. They need some restraint, and we have to exercise it. In after-years they will be tempted in many ways to be intemperate in many things, and then they will have no other check than what they have been taught to put upon themselves; and as they will often thank us when they perceive the cleverness and kindness and care with which we taught them to ride their hobby, so this gratitude will be increased when they find the habits which they acquired in youth remain with them when they are old.

Some of the so-called "hobbies" which have been lately in the market, and have been palmed off upon buyers, seem to justify the opinion that is held that we are losing our critical faculty. We ought to know something of ourselves and what we want, and something of horses, before we invest our money in a purchase. There is always something to be learnt in a hobby or a horse fair. The most knowing will find themselves sometimes in possession of a screw, and after all not be much to blame. Hobbies may and will differ in many points, but

there are points necessary to all, and it is because we have found pursuits presented as pleasures, that seem utterly unable to carry away even a child, that our wonder has been awakened.

We have never had any great opinion of the fancy for "collecting." The museums of old China have ever been a mystery to us, seeing their possessors are not potters, and seem to know and to care but very little, if anything, about the pottery manufacture. It would be possible to study some of the books and some of the prints that we have seen in large and expensive collections, but they do not appear to have been purchased for the sake of literature or art, but only from the accident of their rarity or age. There does not seem to be much work and play in "collections," and what there may be is very evanescent; a man's money seems to be soon spent, and a man's interest seems to be soon lost, in the mere possession of things that can be bought and sold. There is, however, a measure of respectability in all these collections, and many others of the class to which they belong. There are children who are childish, and there are those who seem to continue all through life to be moved and engrossed by trifles, but we own that we read with shame the other day, in the memoirs of a late minister, that his hobby was *autographs*, and that he was ever ready to purchase a specimen with a sermon. If the character of a person could be discovered from his handwriting, this hobby would have that point of "work" about it, which seems to us to be essential. There may be possibilities of pleasure in a pursuit that escape the notice of the most attentive observer. It is said that one

half of the world does not know how the other half lives; there are well-authenticated instances of persons living for a long while without, or with a very little food, and if we take the cases of the postage-stamp collectors of our day, it would seem that we are in the midst of those who differ from us in mind, as the others do in body. A hobby-horse will never grow into a hobby, for there is between them the difference of species. We may try to be pleased with something which can never afford us real pleasure; but we shall only make ourselves tired and ridiculous. We have therefore to prevent, by all means, our children from taking up with childish things, and if they have got hold of them, to persuade them to put them away. Children's hobbies need not be childish. It is possible when we are young to take up a pursuit which will commend itself to us when we are old. We have to put away too many things, unfortunately, that were a part of our past, so that anything that can be retained, which shall serve to link together our broken life and help to preserve its unity, is of unspeakable value.

It will be often to us a source of great gratification if we find that the hobby, on which we have spent and are spending so much of our spare time and money, has that stamina and constitution about it, that it is now as valuable to us as it was at first. Proving that nothing is intended to be in vain, which we all are at times inclined to doubt, we shall be saved from those moments of depression which will give us much vexation of spirit, if we have really lost the spare time and money we have

spent. There is a complementary power, as well as great tenacity of life, in a true hobby, which is gradually revealed and felt. You live to learn that you have really needed it. It is not only of service in the formation of your character, but as all things are related, it is sure to be of greater or less service to you in your professional or business engagements. All these considerations, and many others that might be adduced, are proofs that our hobbies must not be trifling and childish, but must necessarily have in them the element of "work."

Yesterday we met, quite by accident, jogging along very contentedly, one of the exhibitors in a late "Hobby Show," and as he was civil enough to put his nag through its paces for our edification, and to gratify our curiosity by giving us its history, we are able to present our readers with a sketch from life, in which they will easily detect some of our ideal points of a hobby. Having to call upon a neighbour, who had been an entire stranger, we fixed upon a time when we knew he would be free from his daily engagements, and like most of the tribe to which we discovered him to belong, we found him "at home." He was *en deshabille*, and without any apology, he ushered us into his little parlour, and our eye fell at once upon a glass case containing some geological and mineral specimens, and looking around we saw, hanging in a frame upon the wall, "an honourable mention," and buried in its velvet stand, on the table, "a medal." We thought, at once, that we knew where we were, and to break the ice of a first interview, we ventured to enquire the special pursuit in which he had been interested. To our

surprise he named "anatomical preparations." In a moment we bethought ourselves of some unpleasant and unsatisfactory operations in which we had been once engaged when preparing some illustrations for a lecture on comparative anatomy, and imagined that we were about to be introduced to a large, raw-boned, and ungainly steed. Turning to a corner of the room, and opening a cupboard, he brought out of its small stable one of the neatest and cleverest hobbies that we have seen for many a day. With that success which ever attends a simple and resolute obedience to an instinct, with that talent which genius ever uses to shape its ends, perhaps being unconscious of what he was doing, he had decided upon an object which had enabled him for some twenty years to gratify a natural taste, and for which his desire could never possibly fail. A few card-board boxes contained his treasures. In serried rows, a multitude of slips of glass, each labelled, told you what you could not have perceived, that they were specimens of "structure" taken from all parts of the kingdom of nature. Using the term "anatomy" in its ancient and widest sense, and limiting his view to the modern standpoint of the microscope, he had been able, with his little leisure and small means, to produce "anatomical preparations" "of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

The hobby had a compactness and completeness and soundness about it, which greatly commended it to us, and the result

of further enquiries seemed to justify us in some of the opinions which we have expressed in these notes. As the enthusiast showed us "the palate of a periwinkle" which was in the course of preparation, we were reminded of our conviction that the element of "work" must always enter into a pursuit which is to be an unfailing resource when we are tired of our toils and our pleasures.

There was nothing original in the hobby, and nothing remarkable about its history, and we felt therefore that it might be taken as a sample of what might be accomplished by any one. Our idle boy, who is ever in mischief, and our lack-a-daisical girl, who is lolling over her novel or wool-work, might, if they would, turn from drones into bees, but

> "*That they would do*
> *They should do when they would, for this* would *changes*
> *And hath abatements and delays as many*
> *As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;*
> *And then this* should *is like a spendthrift sigh,*
> *That hurts by easing.*"

Earnestness finds because it makes opportunities, and it is only those who have not the spirit to set about something, who have "nothing to do"—

> "*The keen spirit*
> *Seizes the prompt occasion, makes the thought*
> *Start into instant action, and at once*
> *Plans and performs, resolves and executes.*"

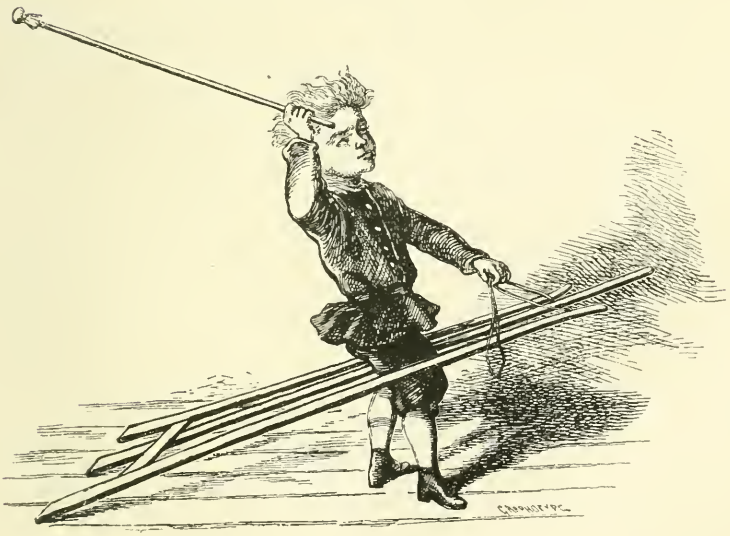
The man whom we found engrossed with his "anatomical preparations" told us the old tale. He was the only son of his

mother, and she was a poor widow. He was early sent into the world to earn a few shillings in a lawyer's office, and was allowed, as his pocket-money, sixpence a-week. The microscopes in an optician's window set him musing, and an old copy of "Evenings at Home," purchased at a book-stall (the well-known origin of many such a fire), kindled his smouldering passion for observation. Flies could be had for catching, and a small lens, costing a few pence, opened up to him the world of wonders, for he had "eyes to see and a heart to understand."

We are tempted at times, as parents, to think that the little that we are able to do for our children is sadly out of keeping with their necessities and our desires. We shall do well at these seasons to remember the influence that our parents had upon us. We might exchange many encouraging experiences. In our own case, for instance, we believe we were moved to select our hobby through our mother, who used to tell us thrice-told tales about her school-girl's life, and how she spent the long summer mornings before breakfast in drawing. There were occasional red-letter days of painting, when in the midst of her home-work and children, she wist not what she did, for while she was painting her picture, she was determining the current of the leisure of a whole life. The fulness and safety of our life as a boy and a youth we are persuaded is to be attributed mainly to our passion for the pencil, and though after all we cannot be said really to draw, we have often utilized the gift we have, by pressing it into our service for lectures, and

the diagrams and cartoons which have been the result have served to supplement what we had to say. During the last few years we have been carried away by our hobby into *comparative composition*, and we flatter ourselves that we are all the happier in the choice of our subject, and in our lines of thought, and light, and shade, and colour.

A boy that is found making a hobby of an easel is very likely to be found standing at it as a man.

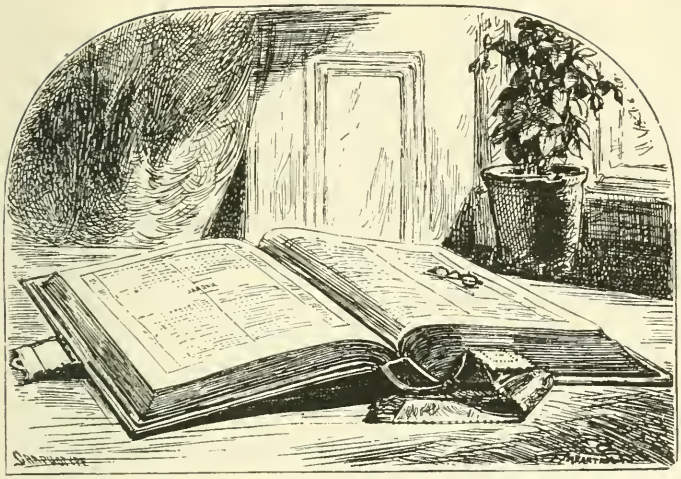


TWIGS FOR NESTS.

VIII.—THE PARENT'S PATTERN.

"*The voice of parents is the voice of gods,*
For to their children they are heaven's lieutenants;
Made fathers, not for common uses merely
Of procreation (*beasts and birds would be*
As noble then as we are), *but to steer*
The wanton freight of youth through storms and dangers,
Which with full sails they bear upon, and straighten
The mortal line of life they bend so often.
For these are we made fathers, and for these
May challenge duty on our children's part."

SHAKSPEARE.



NURSERY NURTURE.

No. VIII.—THE PARENT'S PATTERN.

"*Be ye therefore perfect,*
Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

A Bible is never out of place, for let it be opened by any one, anywhere, it will be found to give and to receive light. Occupying as we do various positions, and sustaining divers relationships, we are each furnished, by our experience of life, with some special information which qualifies all of us to become, in a measure, expositors of Scripture; and we may all discover

that we shall have something more to learn from revelation, respecting those facts and principles which we have been taught by our contact with Nature and Providence. The works of God, and the circumstances in which He has placed us, seem to have been designed by Him to prepare us to understand the complementary teaching of His written word. As we write, we remember a conversation which we once held with a vine-dresser, who had been cutting down his vines to the quick, "that they might bring forth much fruit;" and our readers will readily recal parallel cases, where they have met with those who have been specially interested in certain verses and chapters of the Bible, which have contained allusions to their daily employment or their professional experience, and who have been equally interesting in their unsophisticated exegesis.

There is no place where the Bible gives or receives more light than in a home, and while we should never be justified in arguing, from the well-nigh universal diffusion of the Scriptures in families, that there is any corresponding interest in its contents, it is possible that there is something more than fashion, which leads nearly every founder of a home to give the family Bible a somewhat prominent position amongst his household goods. The Book which contains the revelation of "*The* Father," and "*The* Father's house," may very naturally make its way into every home where there are children, and those who are parents will necessarily know more than others of "The Fatherhood of God."

We must lead an out-door life, going down into the sea in

ships, we must take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, we must ascend the mountains whose tops touch the clouds, and we must travel alone through a great and terrible wilderness, before we shall attain to the high and wonderful knowledge of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God, or be able to feel the full force of those Scriptures which describe His majesty and His glory. And we must have homes and children of our own, we must be much in-doors and be leading a home life, before we shall comprehend the goodness of God as a Father, and repose a childlike confidence in His mercy which endureth for ever. There are psalms which seem as if they were only to be understood at sea, and can only be read with emphasis by seafaring men. A Humboldt or a Livingston might speak as those having authority of the marvellous might of the Creator and Governor of all things, "for that their souls know right well," and a man must be a father before he can know himself, or tell others, how God pities those who fear Him. A mother is in the best position of all others to proclaim the love of God, but even her power will fail her, if she wishes us to learn from anything which she has to say "the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love which passeth knowledge."

The Bible is thus proved by common experience to be a book for all, and our arts and sciences, our daily work and our daily life, instead of being antagonistic to religion or irreconcilable with its truths and claims, are, on the contrary, evidences of its verity and value, and are intended to be our

daily and common means of grace. We may have some page of nature or providence or revelation open before us, and we may not be able to understand what we are reading, except some one should show us; but as soon as we are put into possession of the key, the mysteries of life are solved, and "the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God," harmonizing and complementing our experience, is received as "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation."

We read that "God would have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,"* and whoso is wise will observe that He is causing all things to work together for this end. All earthly things utter some heavenly truth. Men

> "*Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,*
> *Sermons in stones, and good in everything.*"

There is something more than superstition and poetry in the ancient and long-lived idea, that "all things are double, one against another," so that we need not check ourselves with the fear that we are the victims of a vain imagination, if we think that "the invisible things of God are seen from the creation of the world," or that our natural and transitory relations illustrate those which are spiritual and eternal:—

> "*Day unto day uttereth speech,*
> *And night unto night sheweth knowledge.*
> *There is no speech nor language,*
> *Their voice is not heard.*
> *Their line is gone out through all the earth,*
> *And their words to the end of the world.*"

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* 1 Tim. ii. 4. † Ps. xix. 2, 3, 4.

We are told that "in Christ were all things created both in the heavens and on the earth, both visible and invisible; by Him and for Him were all created. And He is before all things, and in Him all things subsist."* When our Lord came into the world, He went about in it teaching that truths lay hid in the light and the darkness, the work and the sickness, the bread and the water, and the wine, and the thousand objects which are familiar to us all in common life. He went abroad, and spoke of Himself as the Shepherd, the King, the Master, the Teacher, the Sower. He came into the homes of the people, and sat down at their weddings, and spoke of himself as *the* Bridegroom. He took up their children in His arms, and spoke of God as *the* Father. Those who heard these words falling from His lips must have felt that His revelation made all things new. The light that disclosed all men and all things, "serving unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,"—"lighting every man that cometh into the world," was verily "the true light." The Teacher of this religion of common life must have been a teacher sent from God. He must have heard and learned of the Father, or He could not have declared that which had been hidden from the foundation of the world. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."†

The parables of our Lord often perplexed those who heard them; and there are still those who regard the analogies of Scripture as obscure and arbitrary. Their conceptions of the

* Col. i. 16, 17. † John i. 4, 5.

character of men and this world are such that any resemblance between earth and heaven, and between man and God, seems to be only fictitious. Types are nothing more to them than poetical fancies. Marriage, for instance, is not a mystery; and the Fatherhood of God is but a figure of speech. The relationships which they sustain to their wives and their children may have been used as similitudes to enable them to form some conception of their Saviour and their God; but their real relatives they believe to be "those according to the flesh." There is still a slowness of heart to understand that our husband is our maker, and that our father is our God; and in this lies the secret of much of the worldliness and much of the misery of our home life.

There is a mystery belonging to our near relationships which has led some to search those Scriptures which refer to homes, and the instincts which are to be found there. They have taken the Word of God as a light, and have explored the great depths in their own hearts, and as far as they could the hearts of those who love them. The wife forgetting her own people and her father's house—the husband leaving his father and his mother, and cleaving to his wife—the mother remembering no more her anguish, for joy that a man-child is born, or refusing to be comforted because it is dead—the father nourishing and bringing up children and finding them rebellious against him, or falling on the neck and kissing a returning and penitent prodigal,—have not only thus been led to understand the iniquity of sinning against God, and the readiness and

joy with which He receives every sinner that repenteth—the love wherewith Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it —but they have also discovered the transcendental truth, that there is no home but heaven, and no father but God.

Just as the study of comparative anatomy has revealed the existence of some typical form, which has never been perfectly embodied in any creature, each organism containing some trace of the master-builder's purpose—giving an earnest of "some better thing;" so it would seem that in the various relationships in human homes we have the shadow of some heavenly pattern, which has been from the beginning the prophecy of time, and which exists only in God, and which is seen only by us when we see Him as He is.

According to the teaching of our Lord, we are not to rest in anything, or in any one, here. No one is good, and nothing is true. The mysterious manner in which He employed the word "verily," and spoke of "the truth;" the sharpness with which he corrected the popular and careless use of the epithet "good;" the way in which he referred to the bread we eat, and the water and the wine we drink, the riches we accumulate, the death we die, seems to imply that there is no substance in material things, and that if we are living in this world without God, we are living in a vain show, in a world of shadows.

We eat the bread that perisheth, but that cannot be "meat indeed," for we hunger, and that alone can be "true bread" which is sufficient to satisfy our craving. We drink and thirst again, but we need to have water, of which if we drank, we

should never thirst. We are born to trouble, and our days are few and evil, and though wine cheers our heart, in it is excess, and we must taste the fruit of "the true vine" if our sorrow is to be turned into joy. Our riches take to themselves wings, and when we die we can carry nothing away; we need to be "provided with bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."* We have homes, and there are in them those who love us, but we have never been able to realise our ideal of what a home should be. There are some traces of "parenthood" to be found in earthly parentage, and there is something like a home in a father's house, but it is only in a few things, and for a little while. They perish as we find them. The love of a mother and the pity of a father are, like all other types, incomplete and evanescent. We, by a kind of instinct, "know how to give good things to our children," but they will soon learn what we, alas! know so well that "we are evil." The home, for a while, is a tabernacle of witness, reared in the wilderness of the selfishness of this world, but the tent is struck; our parents die, and the home is broken, and were not God our Father, we should be orphans, and if there were no heaven, we should have no home.

Natural affection seems ever to have disposed its subjects to supernaturalism. The customs and the opinions which have prevailed from the earliest ages to our own times, prove he universality and the strength of the conviction, that there

* Luke xii. 33.

is some special sanctity in home, and some special mystery in the parental relation. The heathen have always had their household gods. The very brutes seem to be raised by parental instinct, at any rate during its manifestation, to the scale of humanity. We use the term *divine* to describe the expression which the great masters saw when they painted the faces of mothers and their firstborn sons. The universal pity for orphans seems to be explained if we suppose that a child, through the loss of its parents, becomes the ward of heaven—that, when a father and a mother forsake a child, then the Lord takes him up. The singular pre-eminence given to the parental relationship in the Bible, not only in its selection as *the* revelation of God, but in the perpetual and peculiar reference which is made to it from the first page to the last—the fifth commandment being the first with promise—the reform in the home affection having been predicted as the great part of the mission of the forerunner of the Messiah—the early converts to Christianity having been exhorted to show piety first at home—the full and particular directions given to all believers respecting domestic duties—and the warning that those who fail in the lowest of them are worse than infidels;—all these divers and manifold testimonies of God and men serve to establish us in the faith that there is more in the relation of parents to their children than earthly ties, and that we have in this institution the mystery of the Divine Fatherhood.

If the great God be verily our Father, and if He be acting the part of a perfect father toward us, then, as we are often at

a loss what course to pursue in the management of our children, we may safely follow His example and adopt His principles and His plans. Having had our little ones given us to nurse for Him, we are certain to please Him if we bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If "we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," we shall be delivered from the bondage of nervousness, for, having an unction from the Holy One, we shall know all things. Those Scriptures which reveal the Fatherhood of God will be searched by us as if they had been written for our learning, and our minds will be stirred within us, by way of remembrance, by such words as have been adopted as a motto for these notes. Through patience and comfort of such Scriptures we shall have hope. Notwithstanding the proverbial danger of analogies, if we find these cross-lights reveal to us more distinctly any part of our duty, we shall feel that they must have been given to us for our guidance, and we shall take them, however difficult and dangerous it may be to do so, as a lamp to our feet.

Walking in the light of these oracles of God, and looking at our homes and all who are in them as they are thus disclosed to us, we shall be kept from the sin that easily besets those who are called to live a home life. We shall be saved from that familiarity and carelessness with which we are too prone to treat the persons and the duties which are daily around us. We shall be ready to put off our shoes from our feet when we find that the home is holy ground. The sanctities of the home, and the reverence for its inmates, will be preserved by the

remembrance of "*the* Father's house." The revelation of heaven as a home will have an indirect tendency to turn the home into a heaven; and our children will be likely to become perfect, if we are "perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect."

The *direct* light thrown by these words of our Lord falls, as all are aware, upon the will of the heavenly Father respecting His children, revealing His purpose that they should become like Him, returning good for evil, and ever ready to be merciful without respect of persons, so that they might be "in deed and in truth, as well as in name," the children of their Father in heaven. They, however, with many others which declare the Fatherhood of God, cast a *reflected* light upon the relation we sustain to our children, and if these scattered rays could be collected, we should be in possession of what was perhaps intended to be "The Parent's Pattern."

The position of the parent having been ordained of God, and bearing, as may presently be seen, so striking a resemblance to that which He sustains toward us—the purpose of parenthood being the same as His well-known will concerning us—we may, without any presumption, attempt to fashion our homes after the pattern which has been shown us in the mount.

"God would have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth;" hence there is, with other things which work together for this "good," this institution of earthly parenthood. The child is to receive its first notion of God from parents, because He is "the Father," and He wishes men to be

trained, from their youth up, to feel as children towards Him. Thus he has ordained that they shall receive their existence mediately through us, and shall be for a while entirely dependent upon us for their sustenance and safety, and their instruction and control. The parent's home is the child's world. His will is its law. His words are its light. His love is its joy. His providence is its care. The parent is the child's God. He can command its circumstances, and so far can command its character.

To aid us in sustaining this position of a God who is "the Father," we are endowed with parental instinct. We have been formed after the image of Him who created us, and thus our life is wrapt up in the life and welfare of our offspring. A mother cannot forget her sucking child, and she must always have compassion on the son of her womb. A father would pray to God to die in the stead of his son. We love our children, and would spare nothing for their sakes, and they are thus to be induced to believe that God loved the world, and spared not his only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, and that He is willing, with Him, freely to give us all things. They are won by our love to them to love us, and our love being thus shed abroad in their hearts, they keep our commandments. They are thus trained for the service of sons.

Our natural instinct may, if we will, be supplemented by supernatural power, and be guided by the direct teaching and example of God. We may become partakers of the divine nature, and thus be perfect even as our Father who is in heaven

is perfect. Kept by the mighty power of God from upbraiding, having received mercy, we may be so wrought upon by His spirit as to show *mercy*. Our goodness may be constantly leading our little ones to repentance for their childish waywardness and disobedience, and if it be that they grow up and fall away into "sin as scarlet and red like crimson," their remembrance of our great pitifulness and forbearance will bring them to themselves, and they will say "I will arise and go to my father." Sinning against us will be to them like sinning against God, and their return to us may lead to their return to Him.

Becoming partakers of the divine nature, and adopting the divine pattern, our purpose and glory will be their *holiness*. They will perceive, from the providence and law of our home, that we are so ordering all things that they may know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. The plans of the nursery, the choice of the school, the decision of the business, will be subservient to this, if we become perfect even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect. Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, we shall snap, as if they were threads, the cords of custom by which we should be otherwise bound. Our joy will be in their salvation; with a single eye and a steady purpose we shall do our utmost that they may keep themselves from the corruption that is in this world, through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Their acceptance with God will take the precedence of their acceptability to man, and knowing that they who will live godly must

suffer persecution, we shall train them to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Taught of God the law of self-sacrifice, we shall lay down our lives that that which is holy, just, and good may be magnified and made honourable. Being holy as He is holy, "we shall command our children and households after us, and they will keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon us that which He hath spoken unto us."

"With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The *unchangeableness* of God is our pattern for consistency; He is invariably the same. In all His commandments and ordinances He is the same God. In all His dealings with us, in all His warnings and chastenings, there are the same justice and mercy. "The Lord our God is one Lord."* He instils the same truth, in the same loving way—line upon line, precept upon precept, day after day, year after year. The God of our youth is the God of our manhood, and the God of our old age. He has thus drawn the reverential regard of His children, and we approach Him as "the same God over all, blessed for evermore."

A child, by the constitution of its nature, is disposed to regard its parent at first in a similar manner. It looks up to him as if he would never change, and as if he would ever be able and willing to supply all its need. It relies on his kindness and power, his wisdom and justice, as if they would never fail. This confidence continues as long as the parent, to the

* Deut. vi. 4.

eye of the child, remains the same. It is a wonderful but necessary provision for parental work, but it is lost through inconsistency, and when thus forfeited it is never regained. God has ever dealt with his people that his *word* need never be questioned. His word has been truth. All He hath spoken He hath done. Any who have known Him feel that "it is impossible for God to lie." "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that he should change his mind; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"* God is faithful to His promises, and faithful to His threatenings; and we therefore believe His word to the uttermost, and, believing, we are saved. Except our children can be taught to trust they will be ruined, and it is evidently the purpose of God that they should believe in us, that through their faith in us they may be led to believe in Him, and in Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

"And who is sufficient for these things?" "and how shall we order our children, and how shall we do these things unto them?" We are ourselves "but as little children, and know not how to go out or come in." Our thoughts may well trouble us, as we think of ourselves and our position and responsibility; but in the multitude of our thoughts within us, there are comforts of God that can delight our soul. We are, indeed, as elder children teaching those who are younger, and having partially committed to us their care and management, but our Father and their Father is in heaven, and He knows what things we have need of. He knows our frame, and remembers

* Num. xxiii. 19.

we are but dust, and He is able and willing to work in us to purpose and perform His good pleasure. We are not sufficient for anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

We cannot afford to fear,—

> "*Our doubts are traitors,*
> *And make us lose the good we oft might win*
> *By fearing to attempt.*"

We are not left to the written word of God alone for our encouragement and guidance. God is speaking to us in divers manners and at sundry times, and is ever saying the same things. The promises of revelation, as well as its lessons, are repeated in nature. Seed-time and harvest do not cease. Men around us are casting their seed into the ground, and the earth is bringing forth fruit. The seed springs and grows up, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. Men work and sleep. They believe and enter into rest. All, whatever be their field, whether they are sowing the seed of the kingdom or that of the bread which perishes, are labourers together with God, and "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Without God no man can do anything, but with God all things are possible. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."* "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.

* 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."*

"*They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.*
He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."†

New and unspeakable was our joy when it was first told us that we were parents, and we have only to "occupy" the position in which we have been placed—to employ the power and imitate the example we have received from God—and we shall rejoice with the joy, than which there is none greater, of seeing our children walking in the truth. The gardener turns the sapling which way soever he will, for

"*As the twig is bent*
The tree's inclined;"

and let us train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

The unfeigned faith that was in Timothy dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice. Many of us can call to remembrance that the faith that is in us dwelt first in our parents, and if we be not slothful, but followers of those who through trust and patience inherit the promises, we may be persuaded that it will be found in our children also.

"*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting*
Upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children,
To such as keep his covenant,
And to those that remember his commandments to do them."‡

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* James v. 7, 8. † Ps. cxxvi. 5, 6. ‡ Ps. ciii. 17, 18.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary of well-doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."*

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

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